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HALF-HOURS WITH
FAMOUS WRITERS FOR BOYS

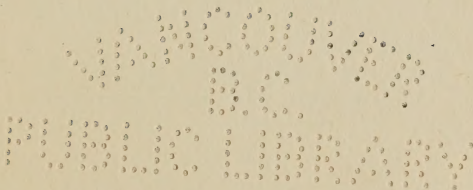


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HALF-HOURS WITH FAMOUS WRITERS FOR BOYS

BY

WILLIAM A. BRYCE



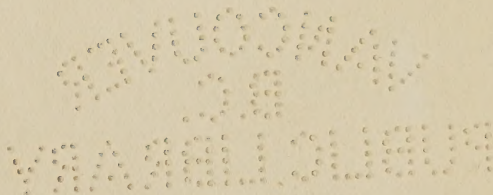
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FOREWORD

HAVE you forgotten, Old Boy, with what rapture you devoured *The Coral Island* at the age of twelve? Do you remember how desperately you longed to know something of the man who wrote it—something, no matter how brief, of the creator of that delightful character Peterkin?

All too brief are the notes that follow, but you may be glad to pass them on (Old Boy, School Teacher, and School Librarian!) to “the wiser youngsters of to-day.” And if the young scamps raise supercilious eyebrows . . . well (to echo R. L. S.), so be it!—

“And may I
And all my pirates share the grave
Where these and their creations lie!”

—W. A. B.

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PLEASE REMEMBER TO
WASH YOUR HANDS
BEFORE YOU READ
THIS BOOK :: :: ::

HALF-HOURS WITH FAMOUS WRITERS FOR BOYS

I

INTRODUCTION

TO THE BOY HIMSELF

IF you ("the wiser youngster of to-day") will ask some of your middle-aged seniors—wholesome-minded, intelligent and happy seniors—whose books they read for pleasure during their school-days, you will hear a list of "Old Favourites"—Old Favourites that have stood the test of time—Old Favourites who, with the love of heaven in their hearts, strove to divert and entertain.

Think what the Old Favourites have done for the English-speaking races! What a wholesome influence they radiated—those men who wrote with an unswerving fidelity to the ideal of good, healthy, sound reading for the young. Schooldays may be long past for many of us, yet still we make forays into those bygone "realms of gold," and emerge with gratitude begotten of pleasure; for many a gorgeous hour of happiness may we old

fogies glean while straying down those old familiar paths in the garden of sweet remembrance. And how we should like to peregrinate these trodden by-ways arm-in-arm with you, my lad ! It would be for you an adventure and perhaps a lesson—though a lesson happily learned—that life, with all its restrictions and formalities, could be quite exciting for your father and grandfather.

Yes, and some of us (if we are reflective and honest men) will acknowledge to you that but for such reading in our early years we might have been worse citizens than you find us—possibly far, far less upright and decent.

Perhaps it was Ballantyne or Kingston who took us so utterly out of ourselves. Possibly George Manville Fenn gave us a notion of seemly behaviour. These men had moral influence in their time : they were the fashioners of a better order. They rescued the soul of boyhood from the breeders of bad literature—from the pernicious rogues of the gutters of Grub Street.

This precept above all : read as many as you please of the modern tales of this present mechanical age, but please understand that *no British boy's education is complete* who has not dipped into such books as *Mr. Midshipman Easy*, *The Last of the Mohicans*, *Tom Cringle's Log* and *The Coral Island*.

They were not written only for a bygone age. Fashioned of material which is imperishable, they were constructed for your own age, and for all generations to come of English-speaking boys !

The Old Favourites we have with us no more,
but their works are immortal.

*“ And is he dead whose glorious mind
Lifts ours on high?
To live in hearts we leave behind
Is not to die.”*

II

DANIEL DEFOE

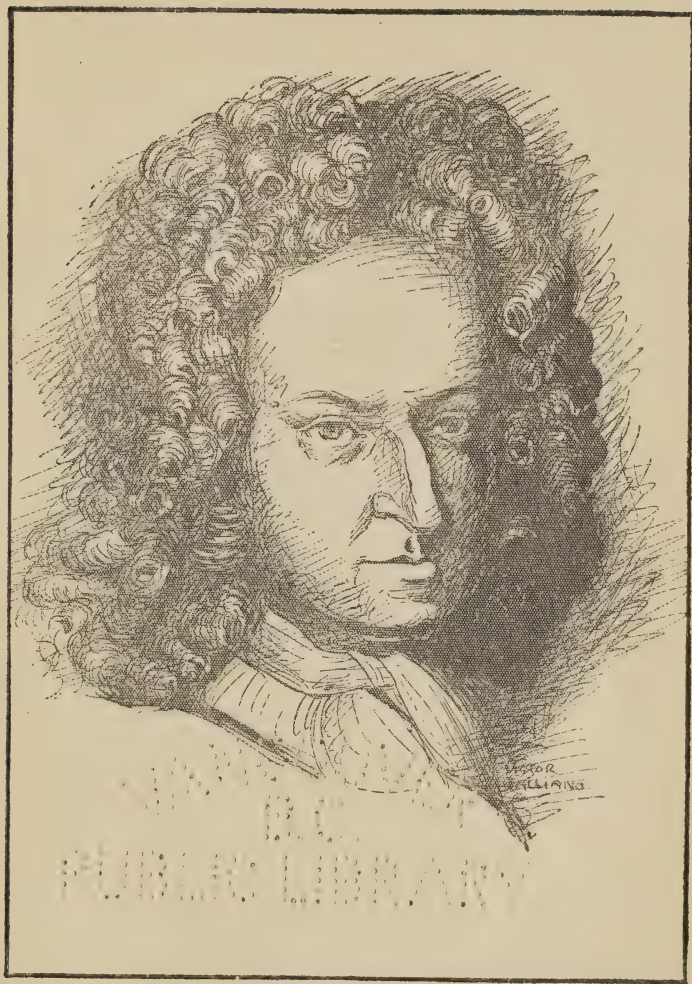
THE population of the British Isles is approximately forty-five millions, and it is approximately true to say that quite a third of this number suffer from a fixed delusion—a fixed delusion that they have read Daniel Defoe's great masterpiece, *The Life and Adventures of Robinson Crusoe*, and know all about it.

Probably less than a thousand people in these Islands have actually read *Robinson Crusoe* (as it ought to be read), “and know all about it.” Most of the fifteen odd millions have read an abridged, adapted edition of Defoe's classic—an edition adapted to the mind of a child of seven or eight.

Robinson Crusoe was not intended for a child of seven or eight. Defoe did not write it for boys of eight to fifteen. He did not write it for a young man of twenty-one. He was advanced in middle-age when he wrote it, and he wrote it for middle-aged men like himself.

“But,” protests Mr. Forty-five, “I read it at the age of fourteen. There is the identical volume on my book-shelves to-day, and a fat volume it is, for it is unabridged. And I read it, every word!”

You are mistaken, Mr. Forty-five. You are suffering from a delusion. You did not read it



DANIEL DEFOE

properly at fourteen, for had you done so, *you would have read it over again several times since!* Actually, you skipped through portions of it—very small portions of it—when you were a boy, and now you imagine that you have read the book *in toto*. Even had you read every word when a boy (and I deny that you ever did) you would not have understood half of it.

Take down the old volume, Mr. Forty-five. Blow the dust off the top and open it. Daniel Defoe intended it for you. He wrote it specially for you. He intended it for tired, middle-aged business men. *He was a tired, middle-aged business man himself.*

Yes, the pages look faded and dingy, but you will find them fresher than the pages of a thriller hot from the press! You will be entranced, and will declare in wonderment that this “kid’s book” is worth fifty of the best modern novels. You will end by saying, “*I never imagined that it was like that!*” But most emphatically it *is* like that. It is the greatest sermon a man ever wrote. Spurgeon could not have written its equal. That grand conception of civilized man alone and face to face with Nature!—a sermon full of moral philosophy far, far beyond the average child.

Yet for all time *Robinson Crusoe* remains “a book for boys.” It was written when Defoe was nearly sixty years old. In his treatise on educational theory, Rousseau says, “My Emile shall read this book (meaning *Robinson Crusoe*) before any other; it shall for a long time be his entire library, and shall always hold an esteemed place. It shall be

the text, on which all our discussions of natural science shall be only commentaries."

"Nobody," said Dr. Johnson, "ever laid it down without wishing it longer."

It was the beginning of stories and novels of adventures. If Daniel Defoe was not, strictly speaking, a writer for boys, he was the father of all boys' writers. And in any case, *Robinson Crusoe* has been translated into the principal languages of the globe, and the more exciting incidents of the story have been read with pleasure by more boys than any other book ever penned.

Daniel Defoe, who was born in 1661, had a personal history of ups and downs—chiefly downs. He studied for the Presbyterian Ministry, but joined in Monmouth's Rebellion and narrowly escaped hanging. He set himself up in trade, selling stockings, but failed in business. He held an appointment under the Government collecting a tax on windows, but lost his job owing to a repeal of the law. He undertook several voyages to Spain, but his trading enterprises were not successful. He became a writer of pamphlets, and although he was a most able pamphleteer, and earned great popularity thereby, his pamphlets landed him in prison and the pillory. Some idea of Defoe's personal appearance may be had from the description offering a reward of £50 for his arrest: "A middle-sized, spare man, about forty years old, of a brown complexion, and dark-brown coloured hair, but wears a wig; a hooked nose, a sharp chin, grey eyes, and a large mole near his mouth." He was next a popular hero, a

Government pensioner, and a political spy (or Government secret agent). Over and above all this, he had been owner of some brick and pantile works at Tilbury, but these failed during his imprisonment, and by this ill-fortune he lost nearly three thousand pounds.

In 1860, when the London, Tilbury and Southend Railway was being completed, the site of Defoe's pantile works was uncovered, and the workmen treasured every scrap of tile or pipe, however broken, for the sake of *Robinson Crusoe*.

No series of misfortunes, however bad, could daunt Defoe's fertile genius and indomitable pluck and industry. He simply could not own himself beaten! He was one of the greatest English journalists. Between February, 1704 and July, 1712, he wrote and published no less than eighty distinct works, containing 4,727 pages, besides his thrice-weekly *Review*! He was far in advance of his time, and the running commentary he made for so many years, as journalist and pamphleteer, was always logical, direct, and truthful. He wrote in the pure speech of the people, the homely dialect of English working folk, and (unlike many of our modern novelists) he had a contempt for trashy analysis and spun-out explanation.

Curiously enough, Defoe's story *Captain Singleton* is much more the conventional boy's book than *Robinson Crusoe*, yet it is very seldom read by boys.

Defoe has been called "the most English of Englishmen," and the more you study his works the more you feel this to be true.

The first edition of *Robinson Crusoe* appeared on

April 25, 1719; the second, seventeen days after; twenty-five days later a third, and a fourth on the eighth of August. It was then published as a serial in the *Original London Post*, being thus the first serial in the language.

Defoe died "of a lethargy" on April 26, 1731, in the seventy-first year of his age, and is buried in ground now known as Bunhill Fields, where his grave may yet be seen.

III

JOHANN RUDOLF WYSS

THE author of *Swiss Family Robinson* was a Swiss professor of philosophy and a librarian at Bern, where he was born in 1781.

There is something particularly appropriate in mentioning Professor Wyss immediately after Daniel Defoe, for *Swiss Family Robinson* is the sole survivor of numerous imitations of Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*.

Stories of castaways upon desert islands have always had, and always will have, an irresistible allure for children, especially for boys.

There comes a stage in every boy's life when he builds himself, in imagination, a lonely shack upon a lonely isle, where he lives for himself alone, in lordly splendour, independent of his elders.

At this stage, *Swiss Family Robinson* has an undoubted appeal.

We all know what a preposterous—what an *impossible* yarn it is, yet it is none the less appreciated for that. The children of Captain Marryat so loved the tale that they gave their father no peace until he promised to write a sequel to it. Marryat was appalled when he tried to read Wyss's fantastic book! The habitat of the *Swiss Family Robinson* was too wonderful for words. The jumbled flora

and fauna, a mixture of all climes and continents, made the worthy Captain's hair almost stand on end. Marryat owned himself beaten: there were few feats that his versatile pen refused to tackle, but this was one of them.

"I have said," he wrote, "that *Swiss Family Robinson* is very amusing; but the fault which I find in it is, that it does not adhere to the probable, or even the possible, *which should ever be the case, in a book, even if fictitious, when written for children.* I pass over the seamanship, or rather the want of it, which occasions impossibilities to be performed on board the wreck, as that is not a matter of any consequence; as in the comedy, where, when people did not understand Greek, Irish did just as well, so it is with a large portion of the seamanship displayed in naval writings."

Marryat made a noble compromise. He wrote a fresh book altogether, one of the finest books ever written for children: *Masterman Ready*. He left to another hand the writing of that sequel to *Swiss Family Robinson*, *Willis the Pilot*.

Most of us would envy Wyss, were his sole claim to fame the fact that he was the almost direct means whereby Marryat was impelled to write *Masterman Ready*. Yet Wyss was a noted man in several other ways. He was, for example, the author of the Swiss National Hymn, "*Rufst du, mein Vaterland?*" He also edited a collection of Swiss legends and folklore tales. But he seldom or never budged from his beloved Bern; and it is quaint to think that the man who collected together, and imprisoned in his classic story (as in a

menagerie), most of the wild creatures from all over the wide, wide world—never moved more than a few paces from his beloved library and his own fireside !

Dear old dreamy Professor ! He died at Bern, the place of his nativity, in 1830, that notable year which saw the birth of the great boys' writer, George Alfred Henty.

Ever gentle and kind, with a charm of manner and a most winning personality, there can have been few men more genuinely loved by all who knew him than Johann Rudolf Wyss. Of a diffident, modest nature, he lived his life quietly, without fuss or display. His favourite saying was the saying of Tasso : "*Lightning seldom strikes low houses.*" Yet he made the *Swiss Family Robinson* build their house in a tree !

IV

JAMES FENIMORE COOPER

"I believe I could write a better story myself!"

How often have we heard that said, and how often we have met the remark with a cynical smile!

In this instance the words were uttered by an American gentleman, lately retired from the sea, living at his beautiful family estate at Cooperstown, on Otsego Lake, in the State of New York. The year was 1819, and the nautical gentleman was thirty years of age.

"Well, my dear," said the gentleman's wife, who sat knitting in a corner of the room, *"I dare you to try!"*

James Fenimore Cooper, a retired naval officer, never refused a challenge; and it is possible that, if his wife had not challenged him in this way, he would have remained in obscurity.

Perhaps one of the most profoundly true sayings is this: that if their wives had not provoked them almost beyond bearing, many other remarkable men would have remained mute and inglorious!

Cooper tried to write a novel, and he succeeded in writing one of the worst novels in history, hopelessly bad in style, structure and characters, and disfigured by typographical errors. It was called *Precaution*.

If this book had been a success, it is possible that he might never have written another. It is true that his temperament was encouraged by success, but it was *inspired* by failure! In Browning's phrase, he made the stumbling-block a stepping stone.

Within a year he had written another novel (a good one this time, for he profited by his previous mistakes), and it turned out to be one of the most successful novels in American literature. The book scored a prodigious success, and deserved it.

The author of *The Last of the Mohicans* was born in New Jersey, in the same year in which Michael Scott was born, 1789. A silhouette taken of him at the age of fourteen shows a profile chiefly marked by determination. Pugnacity was one of his chief characteristics, and at Yale College he showed insubordination—so much so that the College expelled him, little dreaming that he was fated to be *the most important man of letters ever connected with Yale!* With uplifted hands and horror-stricken eyes they thrust him from their midst.

Like Marryat, he went down to the sea in ships, sailing before the mast on a merchant vessel first of all, and afterwards as a midshipman in the U.S. Navy. He resigned in 1811, was happily married, and retired to Cooperstown, where he died in 1851.

American literature began like a child learning to talk, imitating its British parents. Cooper suffers from this drawback in his novels of social life. But in his masterpieces such as *The Last of*

the Mobicans he is truly and consistently American. He created an American literature out of American materials. It had in its robust tones no mere echo of Europe. He was a pioneer.

One reason for Cooper's enormous popularity in foreign countries is that his tales lend themselves easily to translation. It is not the style but the narrative that gives them distinction. Not only do Cooper's novels lose nothing in translation, they positively gain. Every time they were translated they were improved. French, German, Spanish, Italian, Russian, Polish, Turkish and Japanese children hold in their little hands a better book than the original !

Apart from the excellence of his best works, he deserves credit as the founder of two great schools of fiction. He was apparently the only man in America who thought a sea story could be made interesting. While he was engaged in the composition of *The Pilot*, he talked it over with many men and women, and received *not one favourable opinion*. "Not a single individual among all those who discussed the merits of the project, within the range of the author's knowledge, either spoke or looked encouragingly. It is probable that all these persons anticipated a signal failure." The book appeared in 1823. Its success was immediate. Cooper's friends declared that the sea could not be made "interesting," but Cooper's followers, Marryat, Melville, Clark Russell, Stevenson and Conrad, have had no difficulties in engaging the attention of readers.

Cooper was, is, and will be, best known for the

Leather-stocking Tales. There is an orderly development in the character of the hero; the incidents have a regular and disciplined march, although as a matter of fact the books were not written in their logical order, which should have been *Deerslayer*, *Mohicans*, *Pioneers* and *Prairie*. His character Hawkeye is alert, adroit, strong, resourceful, rejoicing in the plentitude of his powers. He will live with D'Artagnan and Cyrano de Bergerac. He is essentially a romantic character: Cooper knew perfectly well what he was about. "In a moral sense this man of the forest is purely a creation. A leading character in a work of fiction has a fair right to the aid which can be obtained from a poetical view of the subject." Cooper's "noble red man" has often been matter for laughter, but those who know most laugh least.

The English of "Cooper of the wood and wave" is chronically bad, but he was a master of action, and his books have in them the principle of life. Balzac said, "If Cooper had succeeded in the painting of character to the same extent that he did in the painting of the phenomena of Nature, he would have uttered the last word of our art." At times he thrills with an intensity which many a greater novelist might well envy. "When pale-faces are in hiding and Indians seeking their scalps, *one can hear the very leaves rustle.*"

V

MICHAEL SCOTT

THE author of *Tom Cringle's Log* was born at Cowlairst, near Glasgow, in 1789. At an early age he went to the West Indies, "with a new blue jacket and snow-white trousers, and shining, well-soaped face," where he ultimately became employed as an estate manager in Jamaica.

"Being naturally a rambling, harum-scarum sort of a young chap, this sort of life jumped better with my disposition than being perched on the top of a tall mahogany tripod, poring over invoices, daybooks, journals and ledgers, with the shining ebony-coloured desk jammed into the pit of my stomach below, and its arbour of bright brass rods constantly perverting the integrity of my curls above."

At that period the Island of Jamaica was in the hey-day of its prosperity, and the harbour of Kingston was full of shipping. Michael Scott revelled in this superb mercantile haven. He had a liking for things nautical, and took to the sea like a duck to water. Everything ashore, too, was novel, stirring and pleasing, and most of his own impressions and experiences he afterwards incorporated in *Tom Cringle's Log* and *The Cruise of the Midge*.

In 1828 we find him home in Glasgow, where from 1829 to 1833 he was busy writing *Tom Cringle's Log* for *Blackwood's Magazine*. *The Cruise of the Midge* was written during the following two years, Scott's death taking place shortly after its completion.

With a great command of language wedded to remarkable descriptive powers, even surpassing those of Marryat, a keen sense of humour, a lively imagination, and a deep knowledge of the sea and of the naval affairs of his time, it is hardly surprising to find that Michael Scott has been hailed as a most successful boys' writer.

While predicting, however, that Michael Scott will be read with enjoyment by many a boy hereafter, it would be as well to point out that *Tom Cringle's Log* and *The Cruise of the Midge* are hardly comprehensible by the younger boy of eight to ten. The writer's somewhat flamboyant style, which sweeps the reader impetuously on through the whole gamut of emotion amid scenes of the *macabre* and scenes of the ludicrous, tragedy hand in hand with comedy, breathless hair's-breadth escapes ending in some farcical, side-splitting episode, sanguinary fray piled on sanguinary fray—and how sanguinary and gruesome Michael Scott makes them!—real blood, not crimson-lake!—is only suitable to children of a larger growth. Sixteen, or even seventeen, may be the best age to read Michael Scott, when we are old enough to realise that :

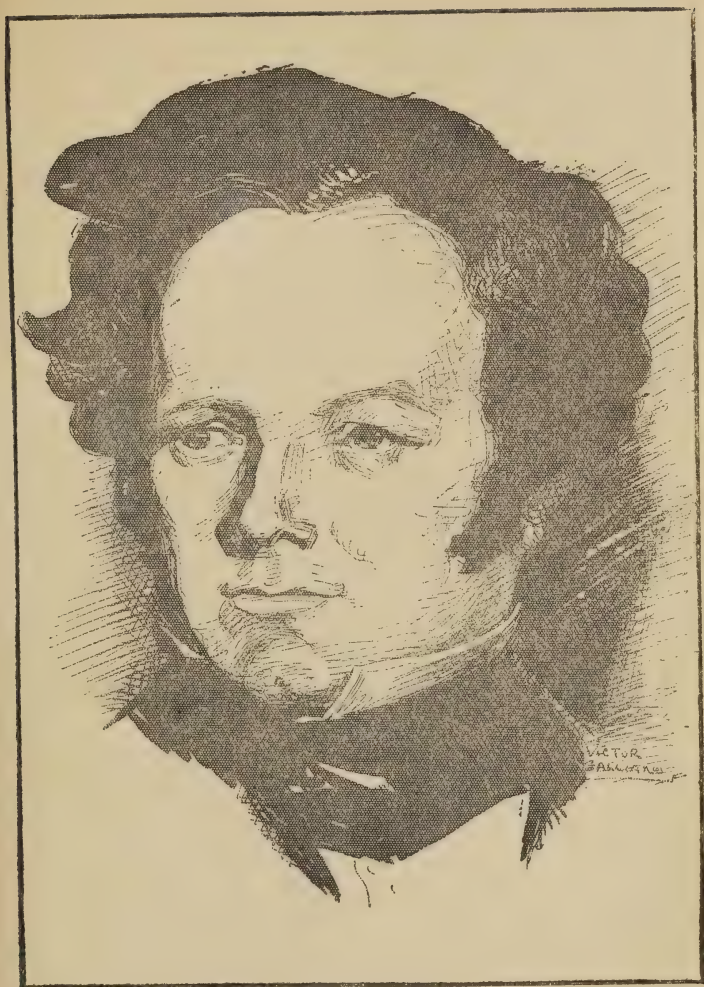
“On life's vast ocean diversely we sail,
Reason the card, but passion is the gale.”

VI

CAPTAIN FREDERICK MARRYAT

THE famous author of that immortal book, *Mr. Midshipman Easy* was born at Westminster on July 10, 1792. He was the grandson of Thomas Marryat (a physician, author of *The Philosophy of Masons*, and a writer of verse), and son of Joseph Marryat, agent for the Island of Granada, who wrote pamphlets in defence of the Slave Trade. Young Marryat tried to run away to sea more than once; at the age of fourteen he entered the Navy, and he served with distinction in many parts of the world until his retirement in 1830. He was promoted to the rank of lieutenant in 1812, and in 1825 he became a captain.

“One of the red-letter days of my life,” he said, “was that on which I first mounted the uniform of a midshipman. My pride and ecstasy were beyond description. I had discarded the school and school-boy dress, and, with them, my almost stagnant existence. Like the chrysalis changed into a butterfly, I fluttered about, as if to try my powers; and felt myself a gay and beautiful creature, free to range over the wide domains of Nature, clear of the trammels of parents or schoolmasters; and my heart bounded within me at the thoughts of being



CAPTAIN FREDERICK MARRYAT

left to enjoy, at my own discretion, the very acme of all the pleasure that human existence could afford ; and I observe that in this, as in most other cases, I met with that disappointment which usually attends us. True it is, that in the days of my youth, I did enjoy myself. I was happy for a time, if happiness it could be called ; but dearly have I paid for it. I contracted a debt, which I have been liquidating by instalments ever since ; nor am I yet emancipated. Even the small portion of felicity that fell to my lot on this memorable morning was brief in duration, and speedily followed by chagrin.

“ But to return to my uniform. I had arrayed myself in it ; my dirk was belted round my waist ; a cocked-hat, of an enormous size, stuck on my head ; and, being perfectly satisfied with my own appearance at the last survey which I had made in the glass, I first rang for the chambermaid, under pretence of telling her to make my room tidy, but in reality that she might admire and compliment me, which she very wisely did ; and I was fool enough to give her half-a-crown and a kiss, for I felt myself quite a man. The waiter, to whom the chambermaid had in all probability communicated the circumstance, presented himself, and having made a low bow, offered the same compliments, and received the same reward, save the kiss. Boots would have come in for his share, had he been in the way, for I was fool enough to receive all their fine speeches as if they were my due, and to pay for them at the same time in ready money. I was a gudgeon and they were sharks ; and more

sharks would soon have been about me, for I heard them, as they left the room, call ‘Boots!’ and ‘Ostler!’—of course to assist in lightening my purse.

“But I was too impatient to wait on my captain and see my ship—so I bounced down the stairs, and in the twinkling of an eye was on my way to Stonehouse, where my vanity received another tribute, by a raw recruit of Marine raising his hand to his head, as he passed by me. I took it as it was meant, raised my hat off my head, and shuffled by with much self-importance. One consideration, I own, mortified me—this was that the *natives* did not appear to admire me half so much as I admired myself. It never occurred to me then that middies were as plentiful at Plymouth Dock as black boys at Port Royal, though, perhaps, not of so much value to their masters.

“A party of officers, in full uniform, were coming from a court-martial. ‘Oh, oh!’ said I, ‘here come *some of us*.’ I seized my dirk in my left hand, as I saw they held their swords, and I stuck my right hand into my bosom as some of them had done. I tried to imitate their erect and officer-like bearing; I put my cocked-hat on fore and aft, with the gold rosette dangling between my two eyes, so that in looking at it, which I could not help doing, I must have squinted. And I held my nose high in the air, like a pig in a hurricane, fancying myself as much an object of admiration to them as I was to myself.

“We passed on opposite tacks, and our respective velocities had separated us to the distance of

twenty or thirty yards, when one of them called out to me in a voice evidently cracked in His Majesty's Service—'Hollo, young gentleman, come back here!'

"I concluded I was going to be complimented on the cut of my coat, to be asked the address of my tailor, and to hear the rakish sit of my hat admired. I now began to think I should hear a contention between the lords of the ocean, as to who should have me as a sample middy on their quarter-decks; and I was even framing an excuse to my father's friend for not joining his ship. Judge then of my surprise and mortification, when I was thus accosted in an angry and menacing tone by the oldest of the officers:

"'Pray, sir, what ship do you belong to?'

"'Sir,' said I, proud to be thus interrogated, 'I belong to His Majesty's ship the *Le ——*' (having a French name, I clapped on both the French and English articles, as being more impressive).

"'Oh, you do, do you?' said the veteran, with an air of conscious superiority; 'then you will be so good as to turn round, go down to Mutton Cove, take a boat, and have your person conveyed with all possible speed on board His Majesty's ship the *Le ——*' (imitating me); 'and tell the first lieutenant it is my order that you be not allowed any more leave while the ship is in port; and I shall tell your captain he must teach his officers better manners than to pass the port-admiral without touching their hats.'

"While this harangue was going on, I stood in
c

a circle, of which I was the centre, and the admiral and the captains formed the circumference ; what little air there was their bodies intercepted, so that I was not only in a stew, but stupefied into the bargain.

“ ‘ There, sir, you hear me—you may go.’ ”

“ ‘ Yes, I do hear you,’ thinks I ; ‘ but how am I to get away from you ? ’ for the cruel captains, like schoolboys round a rat-trap, stood so close that I could not start. Fortunately, this, my blockade, which they no doubt intended for their amusement, saved me for that time. I recollected myself, and said, with affected simplicity of manner, that I had that morning put on my uniform for the first time ; that I had never seen my captain, and never was on board a ship in all my life. At this explanation, the countenance of the admiral relaxed into something that was meant for a smile, and the captains all burst into a loud laugh.

“ ‘ Well, young man,’ said the admiral—who was really a good-tempered fellow, though an old one— ‘ well, young man, since you have never been at sea, it is some excuse for not knowing good manners ; there is no necessity now for delivering my message to the first lieutenant, but you may go on board your ship.’ ”

“ Having seen me well roasted, the captains opened right and left, and let me pass. As I left them I heard one say, ‘ *Just caught—marks of the dogs’ teeth in his heels, I warrant you.* ’ I did not stop to make any reply, but sneaked away, mortified and crestfallen, and certainly obeyed this, the first order which I had ever received in the Service, with

more exactness than I ever did any subsequent one."

As will be seen from the above extract, Captain Marryat could write with a gusto and relish, a breeziness and freshness, that could hardly fail to appeal to readers old and young. With a wealth of ripe experience, worldly wisdom and irrepressible vivacity, he had already embarked, in 1829, upon a literary career, and the new field which he opened up to the reader—so full of vivid lights and shadows, rollicking fun, grinding hardship, stirring adventure, heroic action, warm friendships, bitter hatreds—was in exhilarating contrast to the more prosaic world of the historical romancer and the fashionable novelist of his time. Moreover, Marryat had an admirable gift of lucid, direct narrative and an unfailing fund of incident, and of humour, sometimes bordering on farce. Doubtless his grandfather, the eccentric doctor, stood as a model for the hero's father in *Mr. Midshipman Easy*. A favourite, crazy prescription of this queer practitioner was paper boiled in milk!

From the age of fourteen until he was thirty-eight, Marryat had gained every kind of experience, and this knowledge he used largely in his many novels of the sea. He had taken part in over fifty engagements. He had the distinction of a C.B. for his services in Burmah, a Royal Humane Society's gold medal for gallantry in saving life, and certificates for saving other lives, several times at imminent and extreme danger to his own.

Of all his portraits of adventurous sailors, "Gentleman Chucks" in *Peter Simple* and "Equality

Jack " in *Mr. Midshipman Easy* are the most famous, but he created many other types which rank among prominent figures in English fiction.

Many of his best stories appeared in the *Metropolitan Magazine*, which he edited for about three years. He lived for a time in Brussels, where he was well liked, and he travelled extensively in Canada and the United States of America.

Not the least noted of his books are those written expressly for boys, such as *Masterman Ready* (1841), *The Children of the New Forest* (1847) and *The Little Savage* (1848).

The longest voyage and the strongest gale come to an end at last. Sad to say, Marryat died at Langham Manor, a small farm of his own in Norfolk, on August 9, 1848, his death being hastened by news of the loss of his son by shipwreck.

Even more versatile, as sailor and author, than Fenimore Cooper, he will long continue to delight all boys who come into contact with his manly and vigorous personality.

VII

ALEXANDRE DUMAS

IF celebrities were to summon up their recollections and supply lists of the authors who most charmed their childhood, we may hazard the conjecture that in those lists the name of Dumas would stand high, if not supreme. All boys should read *Monte Cristo* and *The Three Musketeers*, but in addition to these great works, Dumas was the writer of entertaining travels and delightful tales for young people. His *Captain Pamphile*, for example, is a most entertaining treat for any boy. It is true that several of the adventures of the "worthy captain" recall those of Baron Munchausen, while others may have been inspired by Captain Marryat, of whose work Dumas was an ardent admirer, but the conception and working out of this story, besides the character of the captain himself, are widely different. His stories about animals are inimitable. The history of his pets, written thirty years after *Captain Pamphile* is full of delightful reading.

"I was passing," he says, "in the year 1831, along a street near the Porte de Chevet, when I noticed an Englishman in a shop, turning over and over in his hands a turtle which he was proposing

to buy, with the obvious intention of converting it, as soon as it became his property, into turtle soup.

“The resigned air with which the poor creature allowed itself to be thus examined without so much as trying to escape, by withdrawing into its shell, the cruelly gastronomic gaze of its enemy, went to my heart.

“A sudden impulse seized me to save it from the grave of the stockpot, in which it had one foot already. I entered the shop, where I was then well known, and with a glance of intelligence at Madame Beauvais, I asked her if the turtle about which I had called the previous evening had been kept for me. Madame Beauvais grasped my meaning at once with that quickness of perception which characterizes the Parisian shopkeeper, and, politely withdrawing the creature from the hands of the would-be purchaser, she placed it in mine, saying in what she supposed to be English to our insular friend, who stared at her with open eyes and mouth: ‘Pardon me, my lord, the leetle tortul, this shentleman have her bought since the morning.’”

And so off went the turtle with Dumas, to join “a bear, lying on its back and playing with a cork; a monkey seated in a chair, pulling out the hairs of a paint-brush one by one; and a frog in a big glass jar seated on the third rung of a miniature ladder which she could use for the purpose of climbing to the surface of the water when she so pleased.” The bear’s name was Tom, the monkey’s, James the First, and the frog’s, Mademoiselle Canargo. And if you have never read how “Mademoiselle



ALEXANDRE DUMAS

Canargo was billed to eat a hundred flies," then hasten to seize hold of *The Adventures of Captain Pamphile* and enjoy a laugh.

Alexandre Dumas, the famous author of *The Three Musketeers*, was born in 1802, at Villers-Cotterets in France. His grandmother on his father's side was a negress, and Alexandre Dumas was very dark and curly-haired. When he was four years of age, his father died, leaving the family with no other resource than thirty acres of land.

After an education by the village priest, Dumas was employed in the office of an attorney; but in 1822 he paid a visit to Paris, living by poaching in the woods along the way and travelling like a gipsy. Thereafter his life was spent largely in Paris, where as a young man he acted as secretary to the Duke of Orleans—a position which afforded ample opportunity for reading, study and writing. In 1829 he contrived to produce a play called *Henri III*, which brought him fame and considerable money.

As a novelist Dumas was assisted by his happy collaboration with Auguste Magnet, which led to the series of historical novels in which he reconstructed the whole course of French history—the series of "cloak and sword" romances in which the wit, the glorious spirits, the brilliance, the swagger, the movement, and the ingenious narrative, is all his own.

The Three Musketeers became as famous in England as in France. Thackeray said that he could read about Athos from sunrise to sunset "with the utmost contentment of mind," and R. L. Stevenson and Andrew Lang have paid tribute to the gallant

three in *Memories and Portraits* and *Letters to Dead Authors*.

Most of the "history" of the great Dumas-Magnet series is pure fiction, but it was such convincing fiction that it replaced the truest history! Thus Dumas had the unique experience, when he visited the Chateau d'If at Marseilles in 1857, to find that everyone was shown the dungeons of Dantes and the Abbe Faria, as if these characters had actually existed!

"You have come to see the dungeons of Dantes and the Abbe Faria?" asked the *concierge* (an old Catalan who had obtained the coveted post on the plea that she was a relative of Mercedes!). "You shall see them."

"Thanks, my good woman," replied Dumas (who was travelling incognito), "but first I would like to see the remains of the coffin of Kleber and the prison of Mirabeau."

She gave him an astonished look, and made him repeat what he had said.

He repeated it.

"I know nothing about them," she said.

His triumph was complete. Not only had he created what did not exist, but he had annihilated what did exist!

The latter part of the life of Dumas was a record of excessive toil to meet prodigal expenditure and accumulated debts. He built a stupendous chateau called Monte Cristo. He might have called it his Abbotsford—for it hastened his ruin.

Poor Dumas! In his declining years he had his detractors. Even his son said of him, in a moment

of exasperation: "*My father is so vain, that he is capable of standing in livery behind his own carriage to make people think he sports a negro footman!*" He died in this son's house in 1870.

It is difficult to find words to do justice to Alexandre Dumas. He remained, when grown up, a grown-up child, naive, natural, delightful. All through his life he had a boyish elasticity of spirits. One might say that he was a phenomenon rather than a man. He "could not help being good," and doing good. He had the prodigality of Oliver Goldsmith. He made a great deal of money, but he could never learn to fit expenditure to income, and could never find it in his heart to resist the cry of another person's distress. He even assisted Garibaldi, spending huge sums upon arms and munitions of war on his behalf. He said of himself, "I belong to that class of imbeciles which does not know how to refuse," and all through his life he was succouring, nursing, lavishing money upon, and helping in innumerable ways the poor and fallen, working sixteen hours a day in the garret of his house.

He was misunderstood and calumniated during his lifetime, but he has left an imperishable name.

This man of boisterous mirth and manful joy—Romance's Vulcan, Invention's Hercules—not only made the world less sombre and sad for mankind, but made the very sun in the sky appear to glow with a greater effulgence!

"Youth acclaims thee gladdest of the gods that gild his days;
Ages gives thanks for thee, and Death lacks heart to quench thy
praise."

VIII

NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE

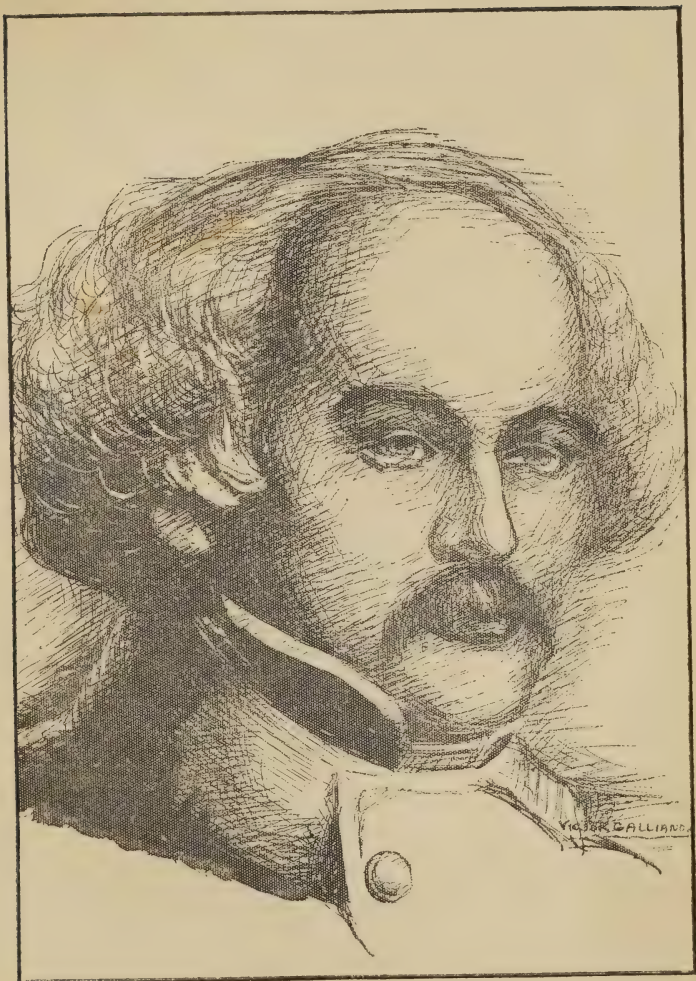
"If I pride myself on anything," said Nathaniel Hawthorne, one of the greatest writers whom America has produced, "it is because I have a smile that children love."

Surely this smile was on his face when he wrote *The Wonder Book* and *Tanglewood Tales*, two books which give him every right to be included in a list of famous writers for boys.

Hawthorne was born at Salem in 1804. The old Hawthorne house still stands in Union Street. It is a plain, clapboarded building with a gabled roof, enclosing a large garret, the fond resort of children on rainy days.

Hawthorne's father was a sea captain. He was descended from a hard-headed ancestor who emigrated to New England in 1630, in the early days of the Civil Wars—a man who explored the woods and led adventurous expeditions against the Indians.

Nathaniel was a great reader. He was quite fond of *Pilgrim's Progress*, "which he used to read by the hour, perched up in a large chair." Spenser's *Færie Queene* was the first book bought with his



NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE

own money. He was given to inventing long, fanciful stories, telling where he was going when he grew to man's estate, and of his wonderful adventures, always ending, "And I'm never coming back again!" He read Scott's *Ivanhoe*, which had just appeared, and this was a great source of pleasure to the growing lad. During a visit to Maine he wrote in a letter: "I live like a bird in the air, so perfect is the freedom I enjoy!" and at this stage he ran a household paper called the *Spectator*, "price twelve cents per annum, payment to be made at the end of the year!" He was still a small boy, but he was extremely fond of long words. He wrote solemn editorials for his paper, which appeared punctually every Wednesday. "*A lady killed a striped snake while swallowing a toad,*" he writes with unconscious humour. "*We have it from herself. This is true courage.*"

He went to college with the poet, Longfellow, and he graduated with Longfellow in 1825. His first book was published in 1837, and in the preface he claims to be the "obscurest man of letters in America." In 1845 he was made surveyor of the Port of Salem, his birthplace, and here he dreamed and wrote.

The Wonder Book was written in June and July of the year 1851. Like Charles Lamb whom he resembles, Hawthorne wrote well for children. The charm and simplicity of his *Wonder Book* is not inferior to Lamb's *The Adventures of Ulysses*. His own children adored him, and his wife gives many an amusing and touching picture of him in his home life. "He would sometimes

rise betimes, and kindle fires in the kitchen and breakfast room and by the time I came down, the tea-kettle boiled, and potatoes were baked and rice cooked and my lord sat with a book, superintending ! ”

He had a keen sense of humour, as when he proposed : “ To find out all sorts of employments for people who have nothing better to do : as, to comb out cows’ tails, shave goats, hoard up the seeds of weeds, etc., etc.”

He could furbish up old-world tales in a wonderfully pleasant manner, although he said once in his quaint way, “ The devil himself gets into my inkstand, and I can only exorcise him by penfuls at a time.”

Every author has imagined and shaped out in his thought more and far better works than those which actually proceeded from his pen ; but few have succeeded better than Hawthorne.

Emerson, Longfellow, Lowell and Oliver Wendall Holmes attended his funeral in May, 1864.

IX

WILLIAM HENRY GILES KINGSTON

HISTORY records that good old King George the Third was very fond of dining on board a frigate commanded by his favourite captain, Sir Harry Neale. The King often went to Weymouth for this reason, where he resided in a house built by his brother, the Duke of Gloucester.

He used to speak (this nautical monarch) to the officers and men of the frigate in the kindest way, and frequently he would call up the midshipmen and give them fatherly advice.

One day, Sir Harry Neale, who had months before received a present of bottled green peas, recollecting them, ordered them to be prepared for dinner. A young midddy named Kingston was invited to the table, a very special honour, for both the King and Queen were present. On the Queen being helped, Sir Harry, who had forgotten when green peas were in season, observed to Her Majesty, "These peas have been in bottle a whole year."

"So I did think," answered the Queen, who was pressing one of them with her fork—with the result that she sent it flying off her plate, to impinge on young Kingston's rather snub nose!

The peas were almost as hard as swanshot, for in those days the way of preserving

vegetables was not so well understood as at present.

William Henry Giles Kingston, who was destined to hoist the flag of romance and gallant endeavour, was the son of the pea-stricken midddy ; but by the time William was born, his father had quitted the quarter-deck and had become a merchant. The date of the boy's birth was 1814, nine years after the battle of Trafalgar.

Much of his youth was spent at Oporto, where his father was in business, and he entered the London office of the firm. He early wrote newspaper articles on Portuguese subjects. These were translated into Portuguese, and the author received a Portuguese knighthood and a pension for his services on the conclusion of the Commercial Treaty of 1842.

In 1851 *Peter the Whaler*, his first book for boys, indicated his true vocation. Kingston retired from business, and during thirty years he wrote 150 tales for boys. He had a practical knowledge of seamanship, and his stories of the sea, full of thrilling adventures and hair-breadth escapes, exactly hit the taste of his juvenile readers.

Classic examples are: *The Three Midshipmen* (1862); *The Three Lieutenants* (1874); *The Three Commanders* (1875) and *The Three Admirals* (1877).

He died at Willesden on August 5, 1880, aged sixty-six years.

An evening spent with Kingston cannot fail to be an evening of unalloyed pleasure, tinged perhaps with a little regret for the lost simplicity and dignity of the modes and manners of a hundred years ago.

X

CAPTAIN MAYNE REID

MAYNE REID, the eldest son of a Presbyterian Minister, was born in the North of Ireland in 1818. Through his mother, he was descended from the "hot and hasty Rutherford" mentioned in Scott's *Marmion*. Educated for the Church by his father, we find him at the age of twenty setting out for Mexico, where he had experiences of wild and riotous times; and for several years his life abounded in incidents fully as exciting as those detailed as occurring to the heroes of his own works of fiction. The prairie was his home, the wild mustang his steed; buffaloes and grizzlies his game, his comrades the redskins.

His adventures with various tribes on the war-path or scalp-hunting have been recounted with unequalled dramatic force in those stirring stories in which romance is reality. Perilous enterprise and hair-breadth escapes were his daily lot, and with his strange and dangerous associates he made excursions up the Red River, and explored the banks of the Missouri and the Platte. Afterwards Mayne Reid penetrated every State in the Union.

In those early years of his fight for life, besides being a hunter, and trader, he at different times was

a store-keeper, tutor, schoolmaster, and even (for a very brief and unappreciated time) a strolling player. Later, in startling contrast to his previous pursuits, he settled down at Philadelphia to write a poetical effusion called *La Cubana* for an American magazine. Here he made the acquaintance of the gifted, but unfortunate Edgar Allan Poe.

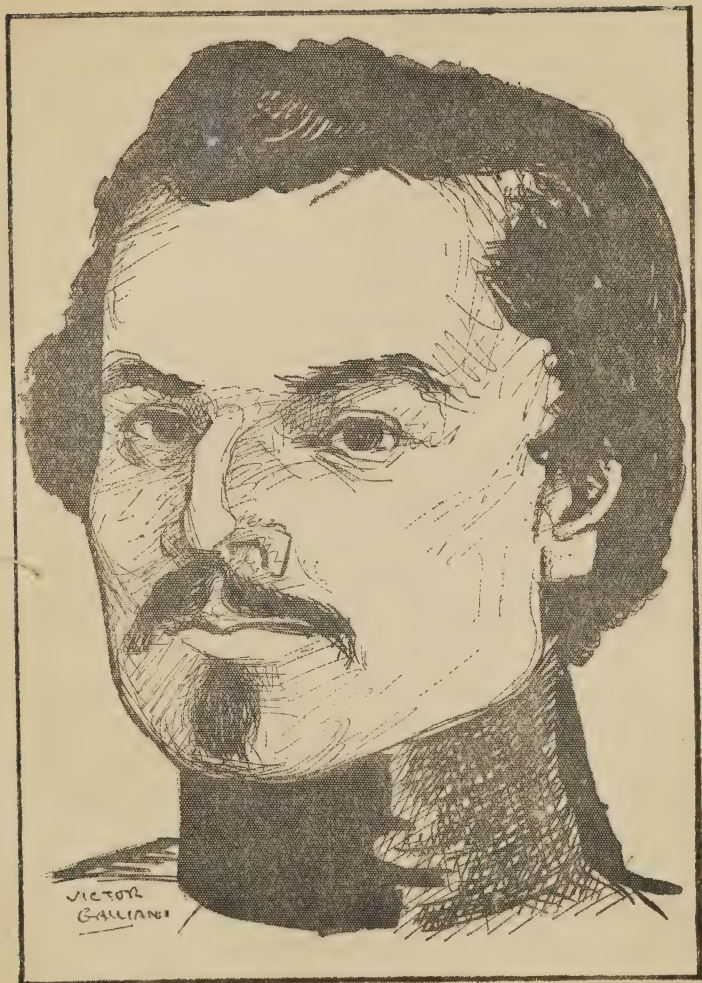
When war broke out between the United States and Mexico, Mayne Reid obtained a commission in the First New York Volunteers; and his first battle was the desperate and sanguinary contest of Monterey. "We were not many," he wrote:

"We were not many—we who stood
Before the iron sleet that day—
Yet many a gallant spirit would
Give half his years, if he but could
Have been with us at Monterey."

There is no doubt that he was a handsome, reckless, dashing young officer, of graceful figure and engaging manners.

Bidding the country adieu in which he had spent such eventful years, he came to England in 1849, and almost immediately began to write those thoroughly manly, healthy and entrancing romances, the reflex of his own chivalric nature. *The Scalp Hunters* was translated into many languages, and within a few years more than a million copies had been sold.

He lived first at Gerrard's Cross, near Slough, and afterwards at Frogmore, Ross-on-Wye; until, at the age of sixty-five, his proud, intrepid heart



CAPTAIN MAYNE REID

ceased to beat, and the pen dropped from the hand of this hunter, explorer, naturalist, soldier and world-famed writer for boys.

The late Sir Arthur Conan Doyle was a great admirer of Captain Mayne Reid. "I do not think that life has any joy to offer," he said, "so complete, so soul-filling as that which comes upon the imaginative lad whose spare time is limited, but who is able to snuggle down into a corner with a book of Mayne Reid's or Fenimore Cooper's, knowing that the next hour is all his own. And how vivid and fresh it all is! Your very heart and soul are out on the prairies and the oceans with your hero. It is you who act and suffer and enjoy. You carry the long, small-bore Kentucky rifle with which such egregious things are done, and you lie out on the topsail yard, and get jerked by the flap of the sail into the Pacific. What a magic it is, this stirring of the boyish heart and mind! Long ere I came to my teens I had traversed every sea and knew the Rockies like my own back garden. How often had I sprung upon the back of the charging buffalo and so escaped him! It was an everyday emergency to have to set the prairie on fire in front of me in order to escape from the fire behind, or to run a mile down a brook to throw the bloodhounds off my trail. I had shot down rapids, I had strapped on my moccasins hindmost to conceal any tracks, I had lain under water with a reed in my mouth, and I had feigned madness to escape the torture. As to the Indian braves whom I slew in single combat, I could have stocked a large graveyard . . . It was all more

real than the reality. Since those days I have in very truth shot bears and harpooned whales, but the performance was flat compared with the first time I did it with Ballantyne, Fenimore Cooper and Captain Mayne Reid at my elbow."

XI

CHARLES KINGSLEY

THE author of *Hereward the Wake* and *Westward Ho!* occupies no mean place in the history of juvenile literature. He was a good writer and a good man. Moreover, he was a patriotic Englishman, devoted to the best interests of his fellow-countrymen, and enthusiastic over the natural beauties and resources of his native land. "Kingsley had a true interest in things as they are and ought to be," said the poet Henley; Mill called him "one of the good influences of the age"; and Andrew Lang said that he was "the greatest of all boys!" Charles Kingsley was born in one of the loveliest spots in England—near Dartmouth, at Holne Vicarage, in Devonshire, in 1819. He was a child of Devon, and he grew up to sing the praises of his native country. No one sang more lustily than he the charms of glorious Devon.

Educated at Cambridge for the Church, he became Rector of Eversley, which living he held until his death in 1875. He worked energetically for Christian Socialism—"Muscular Christianity" he called his own interpretation of the creed. This meant that he took an active interest in social conditions, especially in bettering the material position of working people.

The chair of history at Cambridge was worthily filled by him for some years, and in 1873 he was appointed Canon of Westminster.

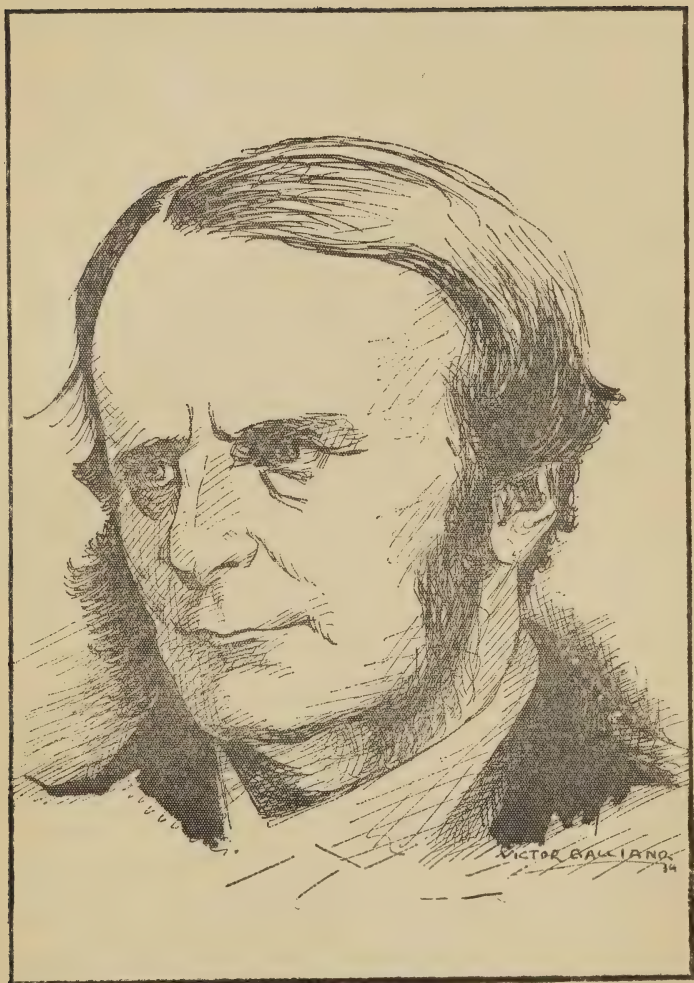
"Do noble things," said Kingsley, "not dream them all day long." His was a robust faith and a splendid optimism. In his view, the sunshine *always* followed the rain; and in reading the record of his life, full as it was of energetic work, we turn a cheerful and encouraging page in human existence. Surely it is no bad thing for us to see abilities honourably exerted, and honourably rewarded!

During 1871, towards the end of his life, he wrote a book called *At Last*, full of impressions received during a visit to the West Indies.

Little did he dream as he busied himself with this book that the words he wrote would inspire Robert Louis Stevenson to write the famous pirate song in *Treasure Island*:

"Fifteen men on the Dead Man's Chest,
Yo-ho-ho! and a bottle of rum."

Yet, ten years afterwards, in turning the pages of *At Last*, Stevenson came upon the following passage: "We were crawling along, in thick haze and heavy rain, having passed Sombrero unseen; and were away in a gray shoreless world of waters, looking out for Virgin Gorda; the first of those numberless isles which Columbus, so goes the tale, discovered on St. Ursula's Day, and named them after the Saint and her eleven thousand mythical virgins. Unfortunately, English buccaneers have since then given to most of them



CHARLES KINGSLEY

less poetic names—The Dutchman's Cap, Broken Jerusalem, The Dead Man's Chest, Rum Island, and so forth."

"The Dead Man's Chest! Rum Island! And so forth!"

Here was the kind of meat R.L.S. was after. Why, the words ran through his head like a refrain!

*"Shipwrecked men on The Dead Man's Chest—
Fifteen men on The Dead Man's Chest"*

But this was not all. On page sixteen of *At Last* Kingsley described a gang of negroes singing "an unintelligible song" with a kind of chorus, "Ya-ho-ho-o-ha!" This chorus is printed on a separate line, detached from the solid mass of a paragraph. The "Ya-ho-ho!" caught Stevenson's eye as he turned the page.

*"Fifteen men on The Dead Man's Chest,
Yo-ho-ho ——"*

Why, it followed as day follows night—and, of course, a bottle of rum!

Westward Ho! is a boys' classic, and deserves to be a boys' classic. It is a grand and powerful tale of the spacious times of great Elizabeth, and *Hereward the Wake* is also an entrancing historical story. His other children's books—*The Heroes* (1856), *The Water-Babies* (1863) and *Madam How and Lady Why* (1869)—are distinguished in their kind.

We speak repeatedly of a good book as "a classic." Perhaps it is as well to consider what that means. "*A good book is the precious life-blood*

of a master spirit." Milton said that! and how true it is. A classic is a book that breathes the spirit, not only of the moment, but of all time. *Westward Ho!* is quarried from the bed-rock of human nature, and it will never die.



XII

THOMAS HUGHES

TOM BROWN'S SCHOOL DAYS is described as one of the best boys' books that appeared in the nineteenth century; indeed, many have called it "the best story of a boy's school days ever written."

Three generations of schoolboys have read it with enjoyment, but it is questionable whether even three per cent of the present generation of schoolboys have even dipped into its three hundred odd pages.

School life has changed so much. *Tom Brown's School Days* is a record of school beer-drinking, stage-coaches, fagging, bullying, virulent scarlet fever, organised school fights, and other obsolete matters—for even the virulent type of scarlet fever is obsolete nowadays.

Three modern grammar-school boys, each fifteen years of age in this year of grace 1934, were given copies of *Tom Brown's School Days*, and begged and implored to report upon it. Each was asked to say honestly what he thought about it, frankly and without reservation, and each replied with school-boy irreverence:

1. "Mouldy."

2. "Good in parts, like the curate's egg, but

mostly dull. They had a queer notion of games in those days."

3. (From a very studious youngster.) "I have always heard that there is a jolly good fight described, so I read on eagerly to find it. The first chapter I found more than tough. The 'Veast' in the vale didn't interest me. Infants are a bore. I was pretty fagged out by the end of chapter three, but picked up at chapter four. Cut out the first three chapters and it isn't so bad. But I had to read 250 pages to get to the fight! Still, the fight is rather good. Not as good, though, as the fights in Hylton Cleaver's books (a modern writer). Hylton Cleaver knocks spots off old Tom Hughes. And the book had no interest for me after the fight."

Let us see, now, what Thomas Hughes says about fighting. He speaks with no uncertain voice upon the subject. In these days of the League of Nations and the spirit of pacifism, does he, or does he not, strike a dissonant note? Gentle reader, I leave you to judge. Please read this extract, which is the only part you will ever read of *Tom Brown's School Days* :

"After all, what would life be without fighting, I should like to know? From the cradle to the grave, fighting, rightly understood, is the business, the real, highest, honestest business of every son of man. Every one who is worth his salt has his enemies, who must be beaten, be they evil thoughts and habits in himself, or spiritual wickedness in high places, or Russians, or border-ruffians, or

Bill, Tom or Harry, who will not let him live in quiet till he has thrashed them.

"It is no good for Quakers, or any other body of men, to uplift their voices against fighting. Human nature is too strong for them, and they don't follow their own precepts. Every soul of them is doing his own piece of fighting, somehow and somewhere. The world might be a better world without fighting, for anything I know, but it wouldn't be our world; and therefore I am dead against crying peace when there is no peace, and isn't meant to be. I'm as sorry as any man to see folk fighting the wrong people and the wrong things, but I'd a deal sooner see them doing that, than that they should have no fight in them."

Pugnacious old Tom! Had he lived in our day, Mussolini would have pinned a star in his button-hole.

He was born, famous old Tom Hughes, as long ago as 1822, at Uffington, Berkshire, and *Tom Brown* appeared first in 1857. Its author denied that the book was in any sense an autobiography, or related in any way to his own school days at Rugby, under Dr. Arnold. His father, a Berkshire squire, had written a book of travel and a well-known political ballad, and Thomas Hughes became acquainted at Rugby with several boys, who, like himself, became famous in after-life.

Matthew Arnold was his warm friend, and he was well known to Arthur Hugh Clough, the poet. Another close associate was Charles Kingsley, with whom he joined the Christian Socialist Movement, and he was one of the founders and principals

of the Working Men's College, London. He sat in Parliament as a Liberal from 1865 to 1874, and presided at the first Co-operative Congress (1869). He was, in fact, a useful man who deserves to be remembered for his public services.

By profession a lawyer, he lived for a time at Chester, where he became a county-court judge.

He died at Brighton in 1896.

XIII

ROBERT MICHAEL BALLANTYNE

“BALLANTYNE, the brave,” as Stevenson calls him, was the nephew of James Ballantyne, the printer of Sir Walter Scott’s works. Born in Edinburgh in 1825, he died in Rome in 1894.

When sixteen years of age, Ballantyne went to Canada, and was for six years in the service of the Hudson’s Bay Company. He returned to Scotland in 1847, and the next year published his first book, *Hudson’s Bay : or Life in the Wilds of North America*.

In 1856 he began the series of excellent stories of adventure for the young with which his name is popularly associated.

The Coral Island was published in 1857. “If there is any boy or man who loves to be melancholy and morose,” said the gentle Ballantyne in his preface, “and who cannot enter with kindly sympathy into the regions of fun, let me seriously advise him to shut my book and put it away. It is not meant for him.”

Shall we ever forget the frontispiece of this immortal story, with its fascinating picture of a pirate schooner, the black flag at its peak, and a feather of smoke coming from one of its guns near the stern! It is one of boyhood’s brightest memories.

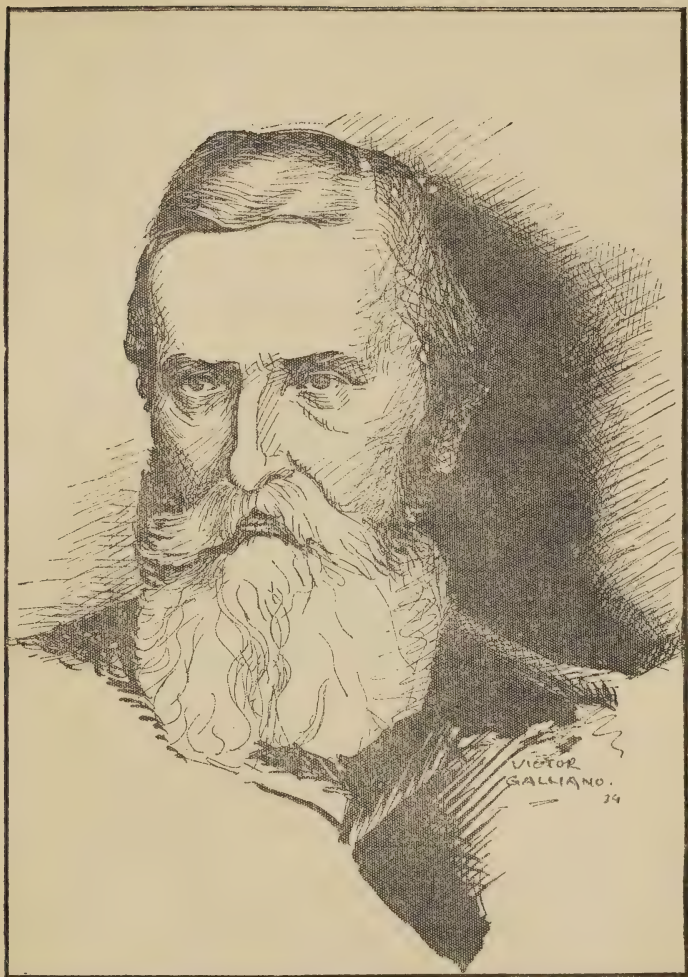
Ballantyne wrote about one hundred books, but who would part with *The Coral Island* for the other ninety-nine?

It is probable that the glowing imagination of more than one of our most successful living novelists was first awakened by the irresistible charm of Ballantyne's masterpiece, which contains not a line that anyone would wish to blot; but it is safe to say that the author of *The Coral Island* would have had nothing but contempt for the reflexes, inhibitions and complexes of the modern writer.

His boys act like boys. They talk like boys. He knew nothing, thank heaven, of the kind of conversation that would only take place in an academy for the teaching of artificial "English."

An amusing mistake in *The Coral Island* regarding the cocoanut decided Ballantyne to acquire all the information for his subsequent books at first hand; and, in consequence, he travelled extensively in Europe, America and Africa. Personal experience, therefore, formed the basis of most of his tales of adventure and exploration.

In order to get first-hand material for his stories, Ballantyne hobnobbed with the keepers of the Bell Rock Lighthouse, where he remained a prisoner for weeks during a frightful storm: when writing his book *Fighting the Flames*, he careered through the streets of London on fire-engines: in the land of the Vikings, he shot ptarmigan, caught salmon, and gathered material for *Erling the Bold*. He spent a winter in Algiers in order to write *The Pirate City*; travelled in South Africa and held



ROBERT MICHAEL BALLANTYNE

intercourse with *The Settler and the Savage*, and went afloat with the fishermen of the North Sea so as to do justice to *The Young Trawler*.

"There is one thing, Mr. Ballantyne," said a lady to him in reference to *The Coral Island*; "there is one thing which I really find it hard to believe. You make one of your three boys dive into a clear pool, go to the bottom, and then, turning on his back, look up and wink and laugh at the other two."

"No, no, not *laugh*," said Ballantyne, remonstratively.

"Well, then, you make him smile."

"Ah! that is true, but there is a vast difference between laughing and smiling under water. But is it not singular that you should doubt the only incident in the story which I personally can verify? I happened to be in lodgings at the seaside while writing that story, and after penning the passage you refer to, I went down to the shore, pulled off my clothes, dived to the bottom, turned on my back, and looking up, I smiled and winked."

XIV

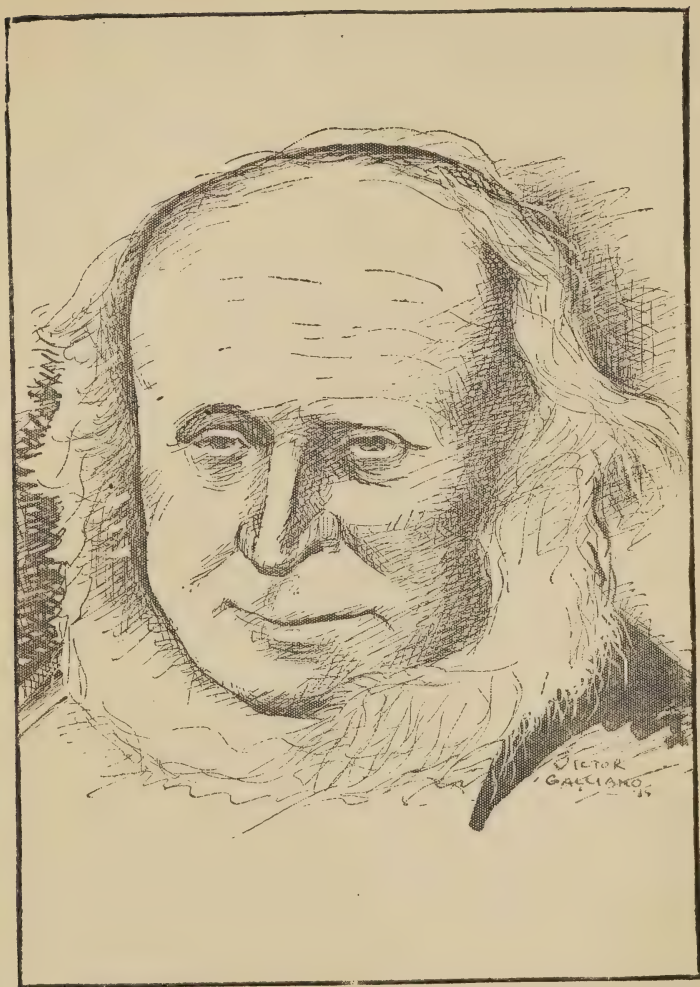
RICHARD DODDRIDGE BLACKMORE

“BLACKMORE’S *Lorna Doone* is still read,” says Mr. Compton Mackenzie (one of our leading literary critics), “but more as a guide book to Exmoor, I believe, than as a story. I could never get on with it, any more than I could get on with Kingsley’s *Westward Ho!*”

Well, of course, it is all a matter of taste. *Lorna Doone* was the only great book that Blackmore wrote, but it is certainly a great book, and a fine story: it is grotesque to say that it is a mere guide book to Exmoor. “If anybody cares to read a simple tale told simply,” they should read *Lorna Doone*. The characters are cast in the true heroic mould and the story is narrated in a masterly manner.

In an orchard at Teddington on the Thames, in 1868, *Lorna Doone* was written; and if you could have seen Blackmore sitting at his little writing table amid his apple trees, you would have taken him for the hero of his own tale—for simple John Ridd, ruddy as his own apples and exceedingly well-favoured—a fine, tall, powerful man.

Richard Doddridge Blackmore was born in Berkshire in 1825, but his father, a clergyman,



RICHARD DODDRIDGE BLACKMORE

moved to the village of Culmstock in Somersetshire soon after his birth. Most of his school days, therefore, were spent in Devon and Somerset, for he attended the famous Blundell's School at Tiverton, where he became head boy. He was, by nature, diffident and shy, and at school he suffered agonies in his earlier years. Public school life was all rough and tumble in those days. It is stated that he endured so much bullying that it affected his health for the rest of his life.

From Blundell's School he went to Exeter College, Oxford. The scholastic calm of Oxford was exactly suited to his quiet, retiring nature. His tastes were simple, and he was a lover of peace. First he became a barrister, and for a short time a schoolmaster; but an uncle dying and leaving him a small fortune, Blackmore purchased land at Teddington and spent the rest of his years market gardening. (In this respect the reader will note that he was very like George Manville Fenn.)

Lorna Doone was no doubt derived from recollections of the scenes of his schooldays.

Well he knew the Forest of Exmoor, from hill-top to combe and from splashing ford to lonely wilderness of grass and fern, by lane and field and woodland to tumbling river and deep, rocky pool. On the banks of Badgworthy he knew the boulder beside which the stout forest stag breathed his last, and many a time on the pebble beach at Porlock Weir he had scrambled down to see what manner of head the stag bore that the boat's crew were bringing in with such pride from the waters of the bay. Few scenes were more romantic to

him than the narrow green glade between the natural tumulus and the fringe of Badgworthy Wood, with its scrubby growth untrimmed by the hand of man. And there he set his tale, amongst the tall banks of heath with rocks and coppice and a tumbling stream that falls from pool to pool towards the Water Slide, where nowadays a rustic bridge enables pedestrians to cross dry-shod.

The background of his story is thus vivid and real. His hero is real, for he was written around a hero of the countryside known as "Girt Jan." The Doones were historical personages: they too were real; and Blackmore blended all into a romance that most of us have little difficulty in "getting on with"—a romance that thrilled our grandfathers and will charm our grandchildren.

So in boyhood, by all means try to read *Lorna Doone*. Roam with Blackmore over the windy heath, and hear the legend of the band of robbers who once harboured there! Creep along bridle tracks with ear alert for smugglers! Shiver in the great frost, as poor John Ridd shivered!

Yes, it is a good book for boys, even though it has a heroine. Few boys will resist Chapter I with its school fight between John Ridd and Robin Snell—an affair of fisticuffs as well told, in its way, as the famous battle in *Tom Brown's School Days*.

Blackmore died among his peaceful orchards in 1900.

XV

JULES VERNE

“BANG !

“*Bang !*

“The pistol shots were almost simultaneous. A cow peacefully grazing fifty yards away received one of the bullets in her back.”

So begins one of Jules Verne's stories, and that is by no means a bad beginning for a story for boys ! A much better beginning, at any rate, than the example given under the chapter of Gordon Stables.

Jules Verne, French author, was born at Nantes, in 1828, where he was educated at the local lycée, afterwards going to Paris to study law. For some years his interests swayed between play-writing and the Bourse, but some travellers' stories which he wrote by chance revealed the true direction of his talent—the telling of delightfully extravagant voyages and adventures, in which he foresaw, with wonderful vision, the future achievements of scientific and mechanical invention.

“For the last twenty years,” said Marshal Lyautey, “the advance of the peoples is merely living the novels of Jules Verne.”

His first success was obtained with *Cinq Semaines*

en Ballon, which he wrote for Hetzel's *Magazin d'Education* in 1862, and thenceforward, for a quarter of a century, scarcely a year passed in which Hetzel did not publish one or more of his amazing stories.

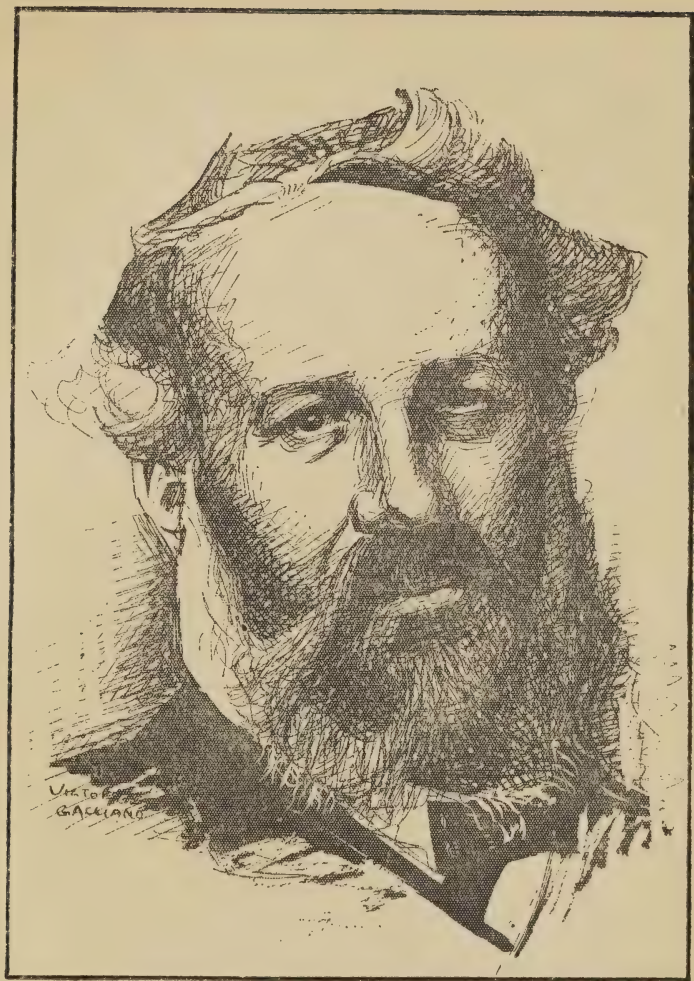
His novels are "dreams come true."

They delight by reason of their sparkling style, their picturesque verve—inherited from Dumas—their good-natured national caricatures, and the ingenuity with which the love element is subordinated.

Jules Verne died at Amiens on March 24, 1905.

As a scientist, he was a man many years in advance of his time, and many of his seemingly improbable creations are now everyday common-places: *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea* only anticipated the submarine, *The Clipper of the Clouds*, the luxurious air-liners of to-day. Even what is generally regarded as the most fantastic of all the adventures of Jules Verne, that described in *From the Earth to the Moon*, is now being seriously discussed as a feasible project of scientific exploration.

Publishers usually compensate authors by paying what is known as a royalty, a percentage or share of the receipts arising from the sale of the books. Verne, however, wrote for forty years on a salary of 20,000 francs a year. By the terms of his contract, he wrote a book every half-year. He was so retiring in disposition that his immediate neighbours in the town of Amiens were unaware that he was a man of international reputation! They, however, looked on him during his lifetime with the kindest of affection, for they held him in



JULES VERNE

high esteem as a man, if not as a writer. They made him an alderman of his ward, and after his death, awaking to the fact of his fame, they erected a monument to his memory in one of the quiet boulevards of the city.

It is pathetic to think that you may search England high and low, and yet fail to find in any of its cities any public monument of a similar nature to "Kingston or Ballantyne the Brave!"

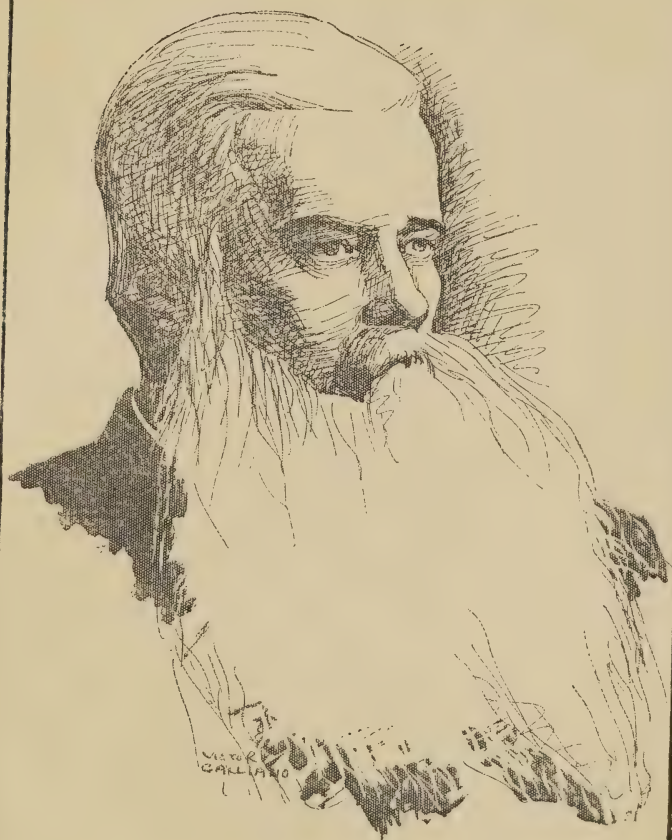
XVI

GEORGE ALFRED HENTY

HENTY occupied a unique position as a writer for boys during his lifetime—a position head and shoulders above everyone else. Yet he did not begin to write books of adventure for boys until he was middle-aged.

Born at Trumpington, near Cambridge, in 1830, he was educated at Westminster School and Caius College, Cambridge. He served in the Crimea in the Purveyor's department, but he found this work little to his taste, and drifted into journalism for the *London Standard*. He volunteered as special correspondent for the Austro-Italian war of 1866, accompanied Garibaldi in his Tyrolese campaign, followed Lord Napier through the mountain gorges to Magdala, and Lord Wolseley across bush and swamp to Kumasi. Next he reported the Franco-German war, starved in Paris through the siege of the Commune, and then turned south to rough it in the Pyrenees during the Carlist insurrection. He was in Asiatic Russia at the time of the Khiva expedition, and later saw the desperate hand-to-hand fighting of the Turks in the Serbian war.

With such a stirring career, it is not surprising



GEORGE ALFRED HENTY

that most of his stories for boys have a historical background. He wrote eighty books in little over thirty years. His first boys' book, *Out on the Pampas*, dates from 1868, and his early books were excellent. His early books are real adventure stories, with plenty of action and little or no "padding"; but as he became more and more established as a successful writer, the "padding" increased until it became like a tropical jungle, and a careful analysis of one of his later books gives the following results :

Preliminary slice of good narrative	...	...	24	pages
Slab of History, carelessly flung together	...	...	40	"
One chapter of adventure	...	...	8	"
Indigestible slab of Campaign	...	...	50	"
Thin slice of adventure	...	...	7	"
More thick (and very tough) Campaign	...	...	40	"

and so on, until one concludes that the typical Henty book is like a plate of badly-made sandwiches, the thin streaks of adventure representing the slices of meat, and the thick chunks of history the all too hefty slabs of bread.

Too little meat and too much bread is not ideal fare : yet Henty, with cool effrontery, served up these dishes year after year. Mixed, they would have been like tolerable bread-pudding, but Henty did not even need to mix his ingredients properly—lucky man ! No one criticized him.

When a new Henty book was received, the reviewer took a hasty glance at the frontispiece. Here was a gorgeous coloured illustration of a soldierly affray on horseback. Of course the book must be interesting ! Period, the Peninsular war,

author, Henty. Reviewer closes book, seizes pen, oozes praise.

Receiving thus, during his lifetime, nothing but adulation, Henty died full of years and honour, after a life of infinite variety and great industry, on board his yacht in Weymouth harbour on November 16, 1902—the greatest writer of books for boys of his time.

His last two books, posthumously published, were *With Kitchener to the Sudan* (1903) and *With the Allies to Peking* (1904).

Henty was as much a British institution as the English breakfast or Mr. Thomas's boiled shirts. The heavily whiskered Victorian papa, who read the reviews, believed that Henty's heavy sandwiches were good for growing boys; and since Victorian boys never questioned their parents, the poor lads gulped them down, eating as little of the bread as possible, and lingering lovingly over the thin shreds of meat. Taken thus, one of these stirring confections of four hundred odd pages could be devoured in half an hour. And it was "a jolly good story!"

XVII

GEORGE MANVILLE FENN

ONE bright morning in 1864, the immortal Charles Dickens, then engaged in editing his publication *All the Year Round*, saw upon his desk a short article by a young, unknown writer named Fenn.

The great Dickens read the article and liked it. He liked it so much that he insisted upon seeing the young man named Fenn; and when he saw him, perhaps he thought of his own early days, when he slipped down a side street in the dark—and furtively pushed his own first *Sketch by Box* into a prosaic London pillar-box!

Poor young Fenn had had endless disappointments. He had been writing and offering short sketches to various periodicals for a couple of years, with little or no success; and we can imagine what this interview meant to him.

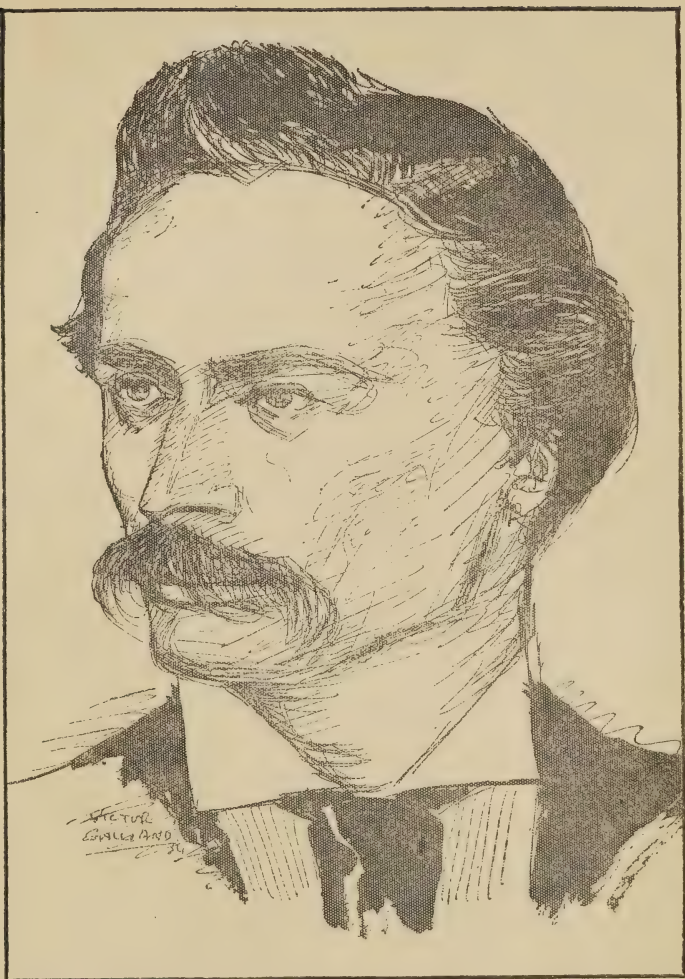
Fenn had been born a year after the birth of Henty, at Westminster, in 1831. He was educated in private schools. At twenty-one he entered one of the training colleges of the National Society, and after the usual time of probation, obtained the mastership of a county school. His next step was to the post of private tutor; but the responsibilities of married life soon induced him to enter into business, printing offering itself as the most con-

genial. This led to small literary ventures, culminating in his offer of the aforementioned article to *All the Year Round*.

In 1873 Fenn purchased *Once a Week* from James Rice, Sir Walter Besant's partner, but in spite of the long list of famous writers and artists who contributed to its pages, this was a most unlucky magazine. Previously he had been editor of *Cassell's Magazine*.

It was not until 1882 that he turned seriously to the writing of books for boys, although he had written *Hollowdell Grange*, a juvenile book, as far back as 1867. These made for him a wide and ever-increasing circle of readers. His boyish characters were human boys of flesh and blood—not the conventional boyish hero (only found in fiction and never in real life). Henty was exploiting the conventional boy hum-bug *ad nauseatum*—the boy who never blenched, no matter how terrible the danger; the boy whose heart never missed a beat, whose knees never knocked together, although his life hung by a hair! Fenn's boys—beautiful lads!—could blush and blench on occasion, and were known to duck their heads when the first shot hurtled over them. They had feelings—natural feelings and they had the natural thoughts and puzzledness of boyhood—and George Manville Fenn recorded their feeling and their thoughts as well as their adventures, in the most fascinating way. Surely the writer who gives to boys something wholesome, something manful and honourable, is not the least of the useful servants of the State!

Fenn understood the psychology of the boy as



GEORGE MANVILLE FENN

few writers understood it. His boy may blench, and hesitate and feel woefully afraid, but he ends by dashing forward in the face of the belching cannon with quite as much elan as Henty's hero; and boys who read Fenn's books, when confronted with unexpected dangers are not too aghast or dumb-founded to find the preliminary stage of their feelings a natural one of funk. They have Fenn's assurance that they have but to hold themselves in rein for a moment and all will be well. A valuable lesson, surely! And yet George Manville Fenn received no medals from his country for this, although he must have made many a youthful V.C.

Had he been a Frenchman like Jules Verne, his books, no doubt, would have been crowned by the French Academy.

Fenn was a great lover of out-door life. He had a deep knowledge of natural history, and his pen-pictures of the Fens, the South Coast, and English wooded scenery are equal to the best descriptive passages of Richard Jefferies. He had an English yeoman's fondness for the soil and for green, growing things, and much of the latter part of his life was devoted to experimental gardening.

He died in 1909, aged seventy-eight, at Syon Lodge, Isleworth.

Of his many books for boys, it will suffice to mention *Devon Boys*, *Cutlass and Cudgel*, *Dick of the Fens* and *Brownsmith's Boy*.

For the sake of British boyhood, it is to be hoped that every juvenile library will continue to display prominently upon its shelves the works of this good man.

XVIII

WILLIAM GORDON STABLES

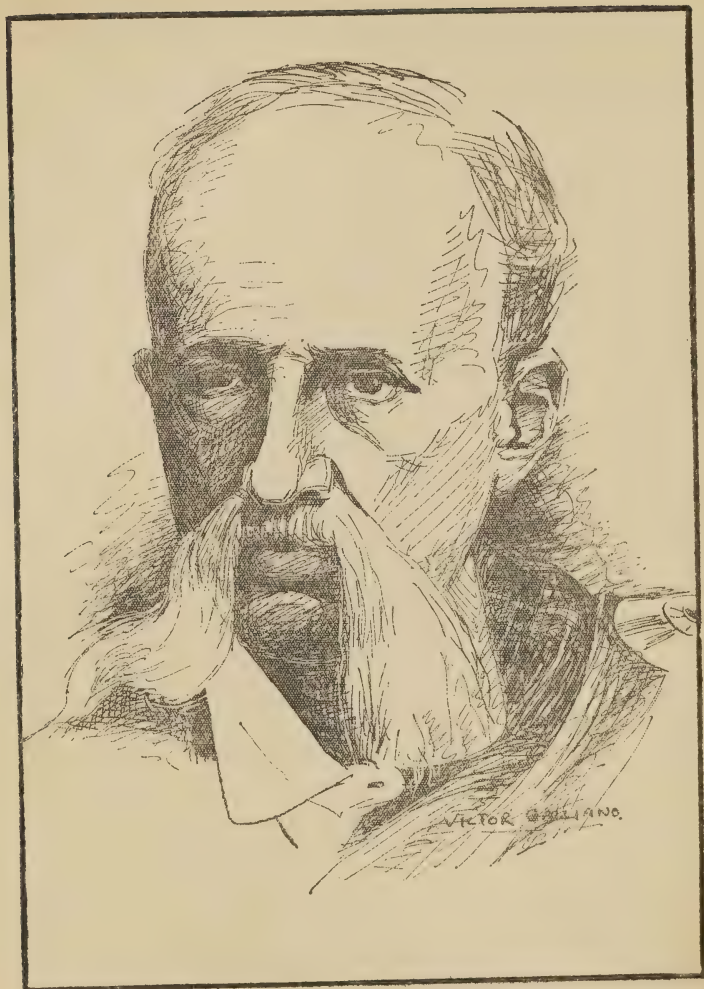
WILLIAM GORDON STABLES, M.D., C.M., R.N., died at his home at 'The Jungle,' Twyford, on May 10, 1910. He was seventy years old.

Gordon Stables (as he preferred to be called) was born in Banffshire and received the chief part of his education at Aberdeen University.

While still a student, at the age of nineteen, he made a first voyage to the Arctic in a small Greenland whaler of 300 tons, an experience he subsequently repeated in a larger vessel. In 1863 he entered the Navy as a surgeon, and his vessel, the *Penguin*, was sent in pursuit of slavers off the Mozambique Coast. He served in the Navy for nine years, and after being invalided out, he spent two years in the Merchant Service, cruising all round Africa, and to India and the South Seas.

His life at sea gave him subject matter for many of his 150 books. A great number of these were books for boys—books of adventure in all parts of the globe, in which stirring incidents are frequent and the atmosphere always breezy and healthy.

Nature study was one of his favourite subjects. A man of the open air, he often spent the summer caravanning here and there in England, Wales and



WILLIAM GORDON STABLES

Scotland; and while doing this, he acted as "wandering secretary" of the Sea Birds Protection Society. He was, indeed, one of the earliest pioneers of caravanning. He called his caravan a "land-yacht," and he was greatly incensed when a postmaster in a Northern town protested against his calling a land vehicle (moving on wheels) a "yacht." Caravanning to him was always *cruising with a land-yacht*, and he was terribly touchy if anyone dared to call it anything else.

He was known as an expert authority on dogs, cats and rabbits, both in England and America, frequently acting as judge at shows; and he compiled some popular treatises on the medical treatment of ailing dogs.

A man of strong personality and powerful national characteristics, he was known to visit Fleet Street and Bouverie Street in the full garb of a Highland gentleman—kilt, plaid, sporran, skean-dhu and all.

His books, many of them written hastily when moving in his "land-yacht" from point to point, and jotted down at odd intervals, have few graces of style, and proceed often in a jerky, spasmodic way. So much is this the case, that it is almost impossible to write about, or to think about Gordon Stables save in a jerky, spasmodic way. To use a medical term, his writings seem afflicted with a kind of literary "Chorea."

Frequently his juvenile reader was brought up with a jolt by a line of dots, or a row of asterisks; and then the narrative started again on a new tack, bumping and jolting on its course as if the "land-

yacht" had struck a patch of heavy weather; for in almost all his stories this want of continuity is most marked.

He had an embarrassing habit, too, of breaking off the thread of his narrative (if it had a thread, for sometimes the thread seemed wanting) and thrusting himself on the notice of his boyish reader, would announce: "Now, I regret to tell you, young sir, that I am about to introduce a set of most utter scoundrels into my tale. I very much deplore this, but since such characters *do* exist, I feel it my bounden duty to warn you of their existence. It wrings my withers to besmirch these pages with such deplorable people, but I must steel my heart in the sacred cause of Truth!"

The boys of to-day would, in all probability, greet such interpolations with howls, hoots and brick-bats, but boys during the lifetime of Gordon Stables were notably meek and long suffering.

His style, full of mannerisms, was garrulous, verbose and desultory; yet sometimes you detect a gleam of real genius; and when he had leisure—when the "land-yacht" rode on an upright keel and "a careful fit" was on him—he would write in a way that was simple, perspicuous and charming.

His book *Born to Command*, a story based upon his experiences in the *Penguin* when hunting for slavers, shows him at his best, and *From the Slums to the Quarter-deck* at his worst.

The opening paragraph of *Born to Command* runs like this:

"Few indeed would have cared to be all alone in a darksome forest on such a night as that on

which our story opens. But young Ronald Adair was no ordinary boy. He was a strange lad in many ways. Nevertheless, I have not the slightest intention to sketch his character descriptively. I would rather it shone out in his actions. If it does not do so, then I am no artist, and my right hand has lost its cunning."

It would be difficult to pick, from a hundred boys' books pulled from the shelves of a juvenile library at random a worse specimen than the foregoing as the opening paragraph of the first chapter of a story for boys. Yet this is Gordon Stables at his best. In one short paragraph he mentions himself three times, and ends up with a reference to his right hand!

He was most emphatically "no artist." He was a famous writer, but not a great one. Yet the ward-room scenes in this story of the Navy are very good indeed, and well worth reading.

Many of his books resemble a jerry-built structure built during leisure hours by an efficient but tired bricklayer, without the aid of a skilled architect, but with valuable hints from Sir James Barrie in consultation with Mr. Heath Robinson; neat walls of "British Bond" here and there, erratic bay-windows badly glazed stuck in each gable-end, dormers with bull's-eyes above, the wood-work all "springs," the roof at the wrong pitch, the slates not torched, and the walls slightly out of "true."

With Gordon Stables it was a matter of "every minute a line"; fill the page at all costs. Yet we must look at the ultimate mass of work he produced

with a sort of veneration—as at a feat—not, possibly, of literature—but at least of “physical and moral endurance and the courage of Ajax.”

His output averaged four books a year for thirty years. The list of his writing occupies *seven pages* of the British Museum Catalogue! And his ramshackle stories, which inculcated manliness and self-reliance, despite their faults, endeared him to British boyhood—so much so that the whole juvenile population mourned his demise.

We ne’er shall see his like again!

XIX

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

ON a certain day in the year 1881, in the room of a house called "the late Miss M'Gregor's cottage," situated in Braemar, in Scotland, a boy and a man were sitting upon the floor making coloured drawings with a shilling box of water-colours. If you had looked in at the window you might have had a good view of the man. He looked quite a young man (his age was only thirty-one) and—alas!—he looked an ailing man.

His limbs were pitifully thin and spidery, and his chest flat, so as to suggest some malnutrition, such sharp angles and corners did his joints make under his clothes! But his soft brown eyes glowed as he bent over his gaudy painting, and there was a mirthful mocking light in them.

His health was bad, but his spirits were good. He was amusing himself and the boy. He was painting the map of an island. It was elaborately and—he thought—beautifully coloured: the shape of it took his fancy: it showed harbours that "*pleased him like sonnets*"; and, little dreaming what it would lead to, an impish impulse made him scrawl at the bottom of his map the words "Treasure Island."

"I am told there are people who do not care for maps," he wrote long afterwards, "and find it hard to believe. The names, the shapes of the woodlands, the courses of the roads and rivers, the prehistoric footsteps of man still distinctly traceable up hill and down dale, the mills and the ruins, the ponds and the ferries, perhaps the *Standing Stone* or the *Druidic Circle* on the heath; here is an inexhaustible fund of interest for any man with eyes to see, or tuppenceworth of imagination to understand with!"

The next thing the young man knew, he had some clean paper before him, and with a pencil he was scribbling out the list of chapters of one of the most famous of adventure books, *Treasure Island*.

"Somewhat in this way," he explains, "as I pored upon my map of *Treasure Island*, the future characters of the book began to appear there visibly among imaginary woods; and their brown faces and bright weapons peeped out upon me from unexpected quarters, as they passed to and fro, fighting and hunting treasure, on these few square inches of a flat projection. It was to be a story for boys; and I had a boy at hand to be a touchstone."

Lucky boy! Who among us would not have craved to be that touchstone!

"No doubt," he continues naively, "the parrot once belonged to *Robinson Crusoe*. No doubt the skeleton is conveyed from Poe. I think little of these, they are trifles and details; and no man can hope to have a monopoly of skeletons or make a corner in talking birds. The stockade, I am



ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON



told, is from *Masterman Ready*. It may be, I care not a jot. These useful writers had fulfilled the poet's saying: departing, they had left behind them:

*'Footprints on the sands of time;
Footprints that perhaps another—'*

and I was the other!"

Robert Louis Stevenson, the painter of the map and the author of *Treasure Island*, was born in Edinburgh in 1850, only son of Thomas Stevenson, a civil engineer. Edinburgh was his home for thirty years, but it was at the Manse of his grandfather, the Reverend Lewis Balfour, at Colinton, where Stevenson passed the happiest days of his childhood. "It was a place at that time like no other; the garden cut into provinces by a great hedge of beech, and overlooked by the church and the terrace of the churchyard, where the tombstones were thick, and after nightfall 'spunkies' might be seen to dance, at least by children; flowerpots lying warm in sunshine; laurels and the great yew making elsewhere a pleasing horror of shade; the smell of water rising from all round, with an added tang of paper-mills; the sound of water everywhere, and the sound of mills—the wheel and the dam singing alternate strain; the birds from every bush and from every corner of the overhanging woods pealing out their notes till the air throbbed with them; and in the midst of all this the Manse."

He was an ugly, badly set-up boy when he went to school in Edinburgh. From 1868 till 1871 he made a feeble effort to become a civil engineer,

but bad health rendering this an unsuitable occupation, he studied for the Scottish Bar, to which he was called in 1875.

In the hope of finding a climate suited to his health, Stevenson settled for a time at Hyeres in France, where he lived at the Chalet la Solitude. This was a picturesque cottage, built in the Swiss manner, on the slope of the hill just above the town, and here he finished writing *Treasure Island*, the story begun in the cottage in Braemar. He lived here eight or nine months—the happiest period of his life. “We all dwell together and make fortunes in the loveliest house you ever saw, with a garden like a fairy story, and a view like a classical landscape,” he wrote. “Little? Well, it is not large. But it is Eden and Beulah and the Delectable Mountains and Eldorado and the Hesperidean Isles and Bimini.”

Year after year the struggle against his ailment increased (for Stevenson’s disease was pulmonary tuberculosis), until in 1888 our author began his South Seas cruise in search of health. This culminated, after three years of wandering, in a settled residence at Apia (the chief town of Upolu in the Samoan group). Here R. L. S. bought an estate called Vailima, the Samoan name for Five Waters, named after a nearby stream and its four tributaries. His house was built of wood, painted a dark green outside, with a red roof of corrugated iron. “My house is a great place,” he wrote; “we have a hall fifty feet long, with a great red-wood stair ascending from it, where we dine in state.” He insisted upon having a useless brick

chimney and a fireplace built (to the amazement of the other settlers in the place), merely because, to his Scottish mind, a home without a fireplace was no home !

He became very fond of Vailima as the following extract shows : " I know pleasure still ; pleasure with a thousand faces and none perfect, a thousand tongues all broken, a thousand hands and all of them with scratching nails. High among these I place the delight of weeding out here alone by the garrulous water, under the silence of the high wood, broken by incongruous sounds of birds. And take my life all through, look at it fore and back and upside down—though I would very fain change myself—I would not change my circumstances."

This passage raises a point of interest which readers of this book are requested to note—the fondness of many great writers of boys' stories for Mother Earth. Daniel Defoe passed much of his time in gardening pursuits ; Captain Marryat had a farm ; the author of *Lorna Doone* ended his days gardening ; George Manville Fenn was a gardener ; and here we find Stevenson taking a delight in weeding, under the high wood, at Vailima.

Stevenson was a friend of the natives and among them his influence was great. They called him Tusitala, the Teller of Tales. They cut a road for him, as a gift of gratitude, and called it Ala Loto Alofa, or " Road of the Loving Heart."

Only two months after the opening of this road, in 1894 and in his forty-fifth year, Stevenson collapsed and died of a cerebral hæmorrhage. The

Union Jack which flew over the house was hauled down and placed over the body as it lay in the hall where he had spent so many delightful hours.

“He cometh unto you with a tale which holdeth children from play, and old men from the chimney corner.”

XX

TALBOT BAINES REED

A RATTLING good school yarn !

Tales of adventure are perhaps the most popular form of fiction among boys and girls between the ages of twelve and fifteen, but schoolboy and schoolgirl stories are still in great demand ; and what boy between these ages will confess that he has never heard of, or has never read, *The Fifth Form at St. Dominic's* ?

Eric, or Little by Little, and such like tales of mawkish sentiment are a thing of the past, but *The Fifth Form at St. Dominic's* is a real classic that stands firm in popular favour to-day—a confirmed favourite.

The author of this favourite book, Talbot Baines Reed, was the son of Sir Charles Reed, M.P., who was Chairman of the First London School Board. He was born at St. Thomas's Square, Hackney, on April 3, 1852, and was educated at the City of London School.

For a time young Reed was manager of his father's type-foundry business, but next devoted his attention to literature. His stories for boys—all of which had large sales—include *The Willoughby Captains*, *Roger Ingleton*, *Minor*, *My Friend Smith*,

Sir Ludor, Follow my Leader and *The Adventures of a Three Guinea Watch*.

You, my boy, whose bright eye lights on this page—if you will turn that eye on some corner of your father's bookshelves, you will surely light upon one of the above titles.

Most are school stories—boarding house school stories—but *My Friend Smith* “deals rather with the failures and successes, the sharp struggles and ultimate triumphs of lads far less fortunately circumstanced socially, whose highest scholastic training was received at a modern establishment for the ‘backward and troublesome’ of the Do-the-boys Hall order, and whose business careers commence on the lowest rung of the commercial ladder.”

It is the sort of book that boys of all classes may read with advantage. The boys in *My Friend Smith* are boys, whose counterparts you will find by the score in school, in office and shop, and street of this workaday world. “Luck is a fool,” says Talbot Baines Reed, “but pluck is a hero.”

To the famous *Boy's Own Paper*, established in 1878, Reed was an early and constant contributor.

Greatly interested in literary history, he became Honorary Secretary of the Bibliographical Society, of which he was one of the founders. He edited and supplied a memoir of the author of the *Pentateuch of Printing*, by William Blades, 1890. One of the greatest authorities on the history of typography, his *History of the Old English Letter Foundries* would, if he had written nothing else, entitle him to a high place in literature.

But to the boy Talbot Baines Reed is the writer of stories dealing with the pranks of schoolboys, bubbling over with the love of mischief and fun, and the trials of young Housemasters; the rollicking mirth of the juniors, the rivalry among the seniors, the school elections, and the football matches—all told in a way that is irresistibly fascinating to a boy at school. The interest of Reed's stories never flags, their style is breezy and healthy, and while there is nothing "preachy" about them, their moral tone is keen and bracing.

Reed had a brave and gentle heart. He died on December 1, 1893, at the comparatively early age of forty-one.

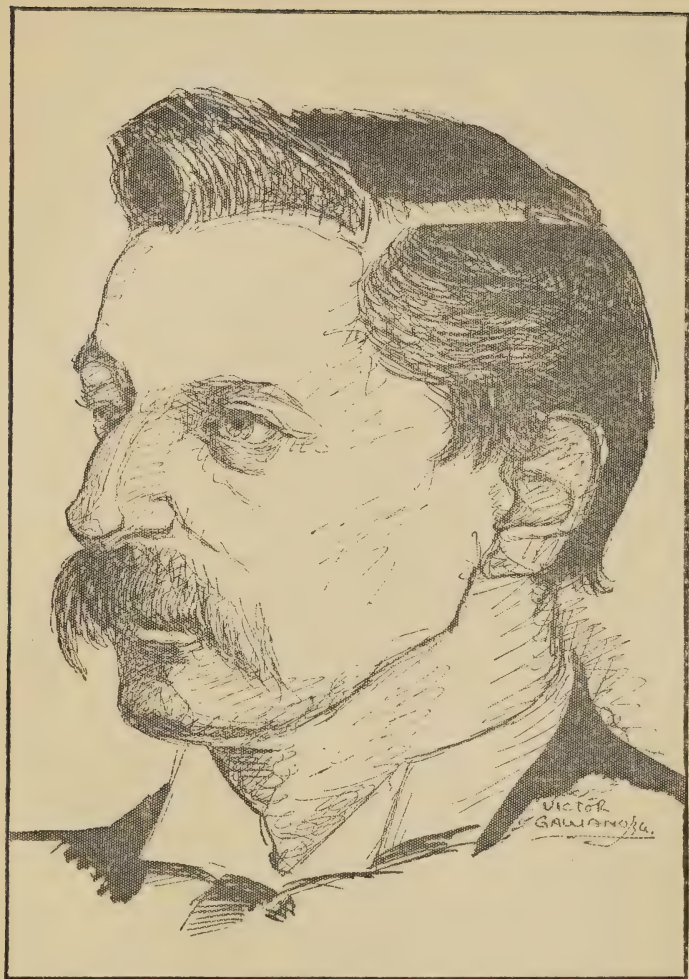
"The knight whose name stands void of blame,
As any the records yield,
Could write *Sans peur et sans reproche*
Upon his stainless shield.
A legend time will never fade,
But lustre fresh impart;
For the best of all possible amulets
Is a brave and gentle heart."

XXI

SIR HENRY RIDER HAGGARD

"My very first attempt at imaginative writing," said the author of *King Solomon's Mines*, "was made while I was a boy at school. One of the masters promised a prize to that youth who should best describe on paper any incident, real or imaginary. I entered the lists, and selected the scene at an operation in a hospital as my subject. The fact that I had never seen an operation, nor crossed the doors of a hospital, did not deter me from this bold endeavour, which, however, was justified by its success. I was declared to have won in the competition, though, probably through the forgetfulness of the master, I remember that I never received the promised prize."

Henry Rider Haggard was born at Bradenham Hall, Norfolk, in 1856, and was educated at Ipswich Grammar School. At the age of nineteen he went to South Africa as secretary to Sir Henry Bulwer, Governor of Natal. Here his pen nearly raised a riot, for in an article which was translated into the *Africander* papers, he described the Dutch women of the Transvaal as "fat," to the great indignation of the ladies themselves, and of their male relatives, who threatened to take up arms to avenge the



SIR HENRY RIDER HAGGARD

“insult.” Happily, the affair ended without bloodshed, although young Haggard received a sound and well-deserved lecture on his indiscretion from the late Sir Bartle Frere.

This experience cooled his literary ardour; but five years later he wrote a book called *Cetewayo and his White Neighbours*, which proved to be a distinct success; and returning to England in 1879, he married and settled down to study for the Bar.

One day he chanced to read a clever article in favour of boys' books. It occurred to him that he might make use of his knowledge of the African native to write a stirring tale for boys. *King Solomon's Mines* was the result. It was almost immediately successful, although three firms, including his previous publishers, refused even to consider it.

King Solomon's Mines is a highly imaginative romance, written in an easy and natural style which appeals to most young people.

Like several other of the famous writers for boys herein mentioned, Rider Haggard took a deep interest in rural and agricultural questions, and was a practical farmer and gardener. In 1902 he published *Rural England*, a valuable study of rural conditions and agriculture. He was knighted in 1912 in recognition of his services to agriculture.

“The advice that I give to would-be authors,” he wrote, “if I may presume to offer it, is to think for a long while before they enter at all upon a career so hard and hazardous, but having entered on it, not to be easily cast down. There are great virtues in perseverance.”

His whole life was a tale of perseverance, and his country lost a valued friend when that life ended in 1925.

Rider Haggard—barrister, justice of the peace, farmer and novelist—was of Stevenson's persuasion, and believed that the best way to write a boy's story was to weave it round an old map or chart. With a twinkle in his eye he would hand visitors to Ditchingham House, where he lived in Norfolk, the bone with which the old Don in the famous romance "drew his chart." There was ink on it still! His sister-in-law had ingeniously executed the map itself—the "original map" of those wonderful mines!—on a piece of linen "three hundred years old." She had "laid on" those wonderfully made characters with her own hand, with coloured pigments.

After the publication of *King Solomon's Mines*, its author was taking the linen chart to be bound with the original manuscript. The frontispiece of the story is an exact reproduction of the original map. Travelling on the Underground Railway, an old lady got into the same compartment as the novelist, and opening a copy of this very work, at once became deeply interested in the frontispiece. She turned it this way and that way—all ways, but was more puzzled than ever.

It was impossible for Rider Haggard to resist the temptation! He took the *real* thing out of his pocket, spread it on his knee, and began studying it too. It caught the innocent old lady's eye. She looked from book to author, from copy to original, and was perfectly bewildered.

When Rider Haggard got out at the next station, there was the old lady staring out of the window with indescribable amazement still written on her face !

In connection with *King Solomon's Mines*, its author once received a letter from a girls' school thanking him most gratefully for writing a book "without a woman in it !"

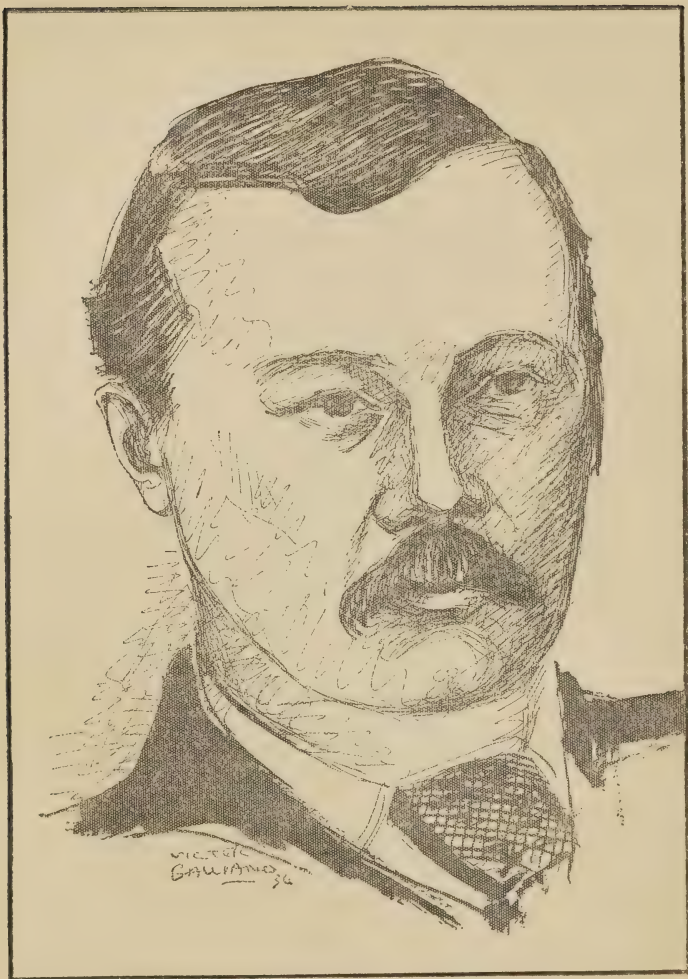
XXII

SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE

TWENTY juvenile borrowers from a public free library in a large industrial city in the Midlands were questioned regarding their knowledge of the author of the immortal "Sherlock Holmes." The boys were accosted, at random, as they entered, and notes made of their replies. All were familiar with the name of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle: eight had read *The White Company* and eleven had borrowed at some time or other *The Exploits of Brigadier Gerard*. Several of those who had read *The White Company* were strong in its praise. Two boys, who entered together, and who proved to be twins, said that they had read it several times, and liked it so much that they had induced their father to buy them a copy.

These facts are mentioned as they appear to justify one in classifying Conan Doyle as, in some measure, a writer for boys.

He was certainly a lover of boyish literature. He tells how he wrote his first story at the age of six. "It was written, I remember, upon foolscap paper, in what might be called a fine, bold hand—four words to the line, and was illustrated by marginal pen-and-ink sketches by the author.



SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE

‘There was a man in it, and there was a tiger. I forget which was the hero, but it didn’t matter much, for they became blended into one about the time when the tiger met the man. I was a realist in the age of the romanticists. I described at some length, both verbally and pictorially, the untimely end of that wayfarer. But when the tiger had absorbed him, I found myself slightly embarrassed as to how my story was to go on. ‘It is very easy to get people into scrapes, and very hard to get them out again,’ I remarked, and I have often had cause to repeat the precocious aphorism of my childhood.”

A little later, the author of the tale of the man and the tiger found himself at school. Here his play-mates soon discovered his talent. He was a “Tusitala”—a teller of tales. On wet half-holidays he was mounted on a desk, and with an audience of small boys squatting around, he would talk himself husky over the adventures of his heroes. “I was bribed with pastry,” he says, “to continue these efforts, and I always stipulated for tarts down and strict business. Sometimes, too, I would stop dead in the very thrill of a crisis, and could only be set agoing again by apples. When I had got as far as, ‘With his left hand in her glossy locks, he was waving the blood-stained knife above her head, when——’ or ‘Slowly, slowly, the door turned upon its hinges, and with eyes which were dilated with horror, the wicked marquis saw——’ I knew that I had my audience in my power.”

Yet, with all his talent, Conan Doyle’s apprentice-

ship to the tale-telling business was long and trying. Long after he had grown up he wrote that "during ten years of hard work, I averaged less than fifty pounds a year from my pen."

Briefly, the facts of his life are as follows: Born in 1859 in Edinburgh, of a family of famous cartoonists, he studied at Stonyhurst College and Edinburgh University. He attained his degree in medicine after a period of advanced study in Germany, and for eight years he practised as a doctor at Southsea. Success in literature led him to give up his medical practice and devote his time to writing.

The public was first introduced to Sherlock Holmes in 1887 with the publication of *A Study in Scarlet*.

The Boer War found Doyle in South Africa as chief surgeon of a field hospital. He later wrote two books defending British tactics, and one of these was printed in twelve languages and distributed throughout Europe by the British authorities. Doyle was awarded by being knighted in 1902. He died in 1930.

XXIII

JOHN MASEFIELD

SOME people may be surprised to see the name of the Poet Laureate included in a list of famous writers for boys ; yet, Mr. Masefield has produced three of the best books written for boys in modern times. In reply to an enquiry addressed to him on this point, he would only say, with characteristic modesty, that he had written "two or three books for boys a great many years ago."

The truth is, that one of these books falls not far short of the standard of Stevenson's *Treasure Island*, and it is safe to predict that posterity will allot Mr. Masefield no mean place in the Valhalla of juvenile literature.

The story of *Jim Davis*, indeed, bids fair to become a boys' classic, and deserves to be a lasting addition to any juvenile library. This was the Poet Laureate's first boys' book, the other two being *Martin Hyde*, the *Duke's Messenger*, a historical tale of great interest, and *A Book of Discoveries*—the sort of discovery book that is guaranteed to make any boy's eyes light up with pleasure and pride.

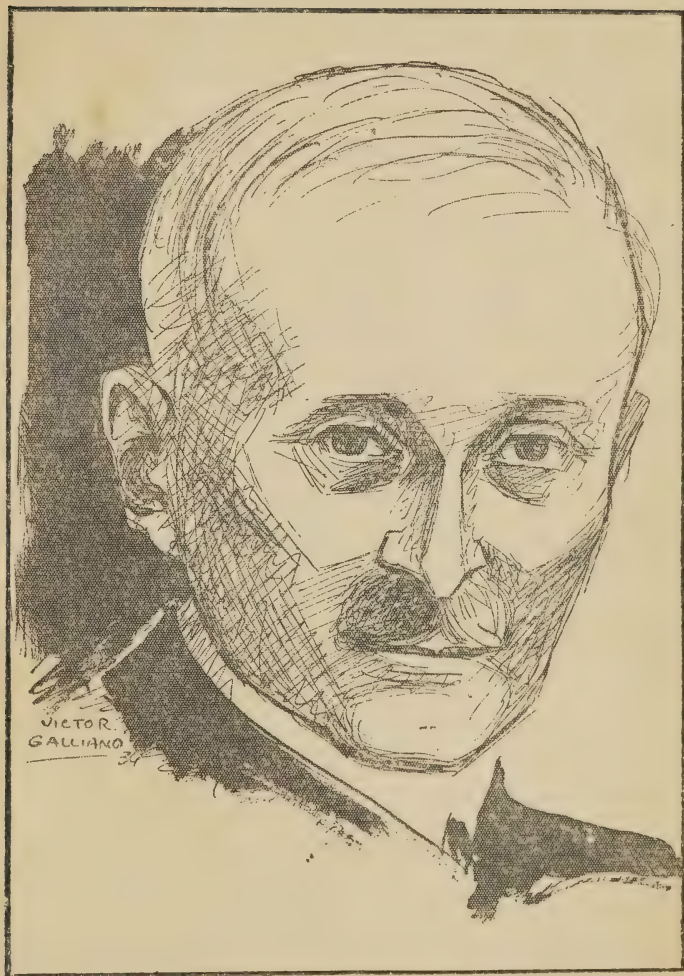
Born at Ledbury in 1878, Mr. John Masefield, like Marryat and Fenimore Cooper, went to sea at

an early age. He was aboard the *Comway* when fourteen years old, and he made many voyages, living an adventurous, elemental life. Maybe, as a boy, he was bent upon being a pirate "with a bright brass pivot-gun," a spy-glass beneath his arm, a cocked hat, a sash of crimson velvet, and a silver whistle round his neck "secured to a golden cord," but certain it is that, as a boy, he never dreamt that his Sovereign would appoint him to that ancient office which formerly drew 100 marks, with a tierce of Canary wine thrown in!

"In all your voyaging, what is the most beautiful sight you have ever seen?" is the question put to an old sea farer. "My own ship a-rolling down to St. Helena under stunsails in the South-East Trade!"—a reply that draws hearty approval from our bard of the sea.

"The sea only breeds one sort—the virile sort," says Mr. Lubbock, one of our greatest sea writers, and the sea bred one of the virile sort when she bred our present Poet Laureate. Ships may change, but the sea will never change. The sea still demands man's last ounce of courage and endeavour. "The modern steel full-rigger tested out the soul of the seaman as much as any Elizabethan carrick or Stuart frigate."

Of leaks and lee shores, pumping in the dog watches, weed and barnacles, crowded foc's'les and flooded main decks, poopers and smashed wheels—all "*the toughest hooray o' the racket*" at sea, our poet has had his fill. No wonder most of his writings have in them the very swing and flavour of the sea! No wonder they are a vivid blend of romance



JOHN MASEFIELD

and realism ! Now he resides at Pinbury Park Cirencester, wooing literature and the muses in quiet retirement : into that retirement he must be followed by the good wishes of all whom his writings have delighted—very many in number—and not the least delighted among them are the fortunate boys who have read *Jim Davis* and *Martin Hyde*.

Mr. Masefield is a remarkable man, and there seems to be a certain unity of character in him, from the boyish sea-faring aforementioned to the present hour, which renders even so brief a reference as this interesting to those who will draw inferences from human nature—those who anticipate and hope that the maturity of his genius will continue to glow with such splendour as reflects a lustre upon the name of England.

His life began, like an old bill of lading, “ shipped by the Grace of God in good order and condition.”

“ *And so God send thee, good ship,*” say we (like the same old bill of lading), “ *to thy desired haven of safety. Amen.*”

THE END

